REMBRANDT

Harmensz Van Rijn

By EMILE MICHEL

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REMBRANDT

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HARMENSZ VAN RIJN

EDITED BY EMILE MICHEL

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REMBRANDT

HARMENSZ VAN RIJN

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PREFACE

REMBRANDT is not only the greatest of the Dutch painters; he is unquestionably one of the greatest masters of all schools and of all periods. When in 1898, on the accession of H.M. Queen Wilhelmina, the Dutch nation wished to pay the highest homage in their power to their young sovereign, they could find no more significant token of their attachment than an invitation to inaugurate an exhibition of the master's works, thus uniting, on a memorable occasion, the two most famous and most popular names of Holland—those of Orange and of Rembrandt.

Rembrandt's country is now preparing to celebrate his tercentenary, on July 15 of this year. Anxious to give all possible dignity to the rejoicings that are to take place on this date at Leyden, his native city, and at Amsterdam, where he spent the greater part of his life, she bids to this solemn manifestation not only all the master's compatriots, but the hosts of his admirers throughout the civilised world.

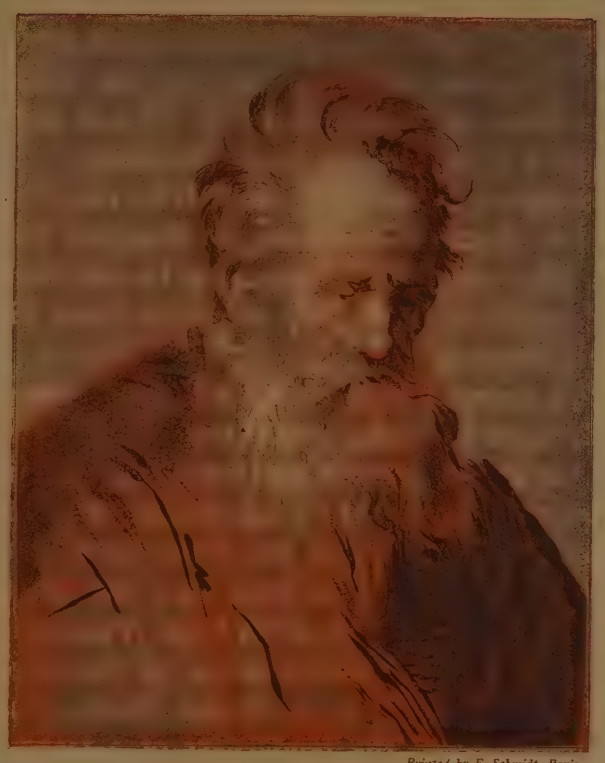
Though Rembrandt was a true son of Holland by birth, by family, by education, and by the inspiration of his greatest works, the most important of which are still preserved at The Hague and at Amsterdam, though no artist ever struck his roots more deeply into his native soil, or was more completely the son of his age, there is not one among all the richly and variously endowed representatives of the Dutch School who stood so far above his most distinguished fellow artists by the universality of his gifts, the poetry, the novelty, and the nobility of his aspirations. Names such as Frans Hals, Terborch, Metsu, Steen, Vermeer, Cuyp, Adriaen van de Velde, Paul Potter, van Goyen, Ruisdael, and many others, would no doubt suffice to shed lustre on the school. Yet without Rembrandt it would admittedly be shorn of its greatest glory. But with him as its head; with etchings such as the 'Hundred Guilder Piece,' the 'Christ Preaching,' the 'Faust'; with portraits such as the 'Shipbuilder and his Wife,' 'The Preacher Anslo,' 'Elisabeth Bas,' 'Titus,' a 'Young Rabbi,' the 'Burgomaster Six' and the 'Lady with a Fan,' the 'Saskia' at Cassel, and the 'Hendrickje' in the Louvre; with the 'Danaë' and the 'Bathsheba,' and the many portraits of himself, painted or engraved, which he has left us; with his episodes from the Scriptures, such as the 'Tobias,' 'Christ and the Magdalene,' 'The Presentation in the Temple,' 'The Workers in the Vineyard,' the 'Supper at Emmaüs'; with large canvases such as the 'Anatomy-

Lesson' and the 'Night-Watch,' the 'Syndics,' and many other masterpieces that might swell this list, the Dutch School may challenge comparison with any other, and claim its place in the very first rank.

Close as were the ties that bound him to his country and his period, Rembrandt yet stands out in strong relief from both, by virtue of his essential originality. Though, in common with the rest of mankind, he did not escape the influences of his day and his surroundings, he was governed by them only at the outset of his career. Thanks to strenuous and intelligent toil, he was able to resist, and at last to 'emancipate himself from them altogether. Alone among his practical and common-sense environment, he reveals himself the poet, the seer, and the thinker; he alone is inspired by a divine energy, and if, like all other masters, he requires to rest for a while on the firm ground of realities, it is only to rise in freer flight towards the empyrean of his dreams.

Rembrandt's strength lies, above all, in his power of expressing the deepest and most touching sentiments of humanity. Standing on the confines of the material world, and that spiritual world which encompasses and importunes us at the most solemn moments of our life, he passes every instant from one to the other, and forces us to follow him. He attempts to make us hear and see what "ear hath not heard, nor eye seen." Dreams, with their confused illumination, the agony and the calm of approaching death, all the redoubtable problems that force themselves upon us at certain hours, rise before us: the fervour of intimate prayer, the tenderness of a father finding his lost son, or of a God revealing Himself to the faithful, the dull gaze and dubious gestures of life returning to the body it had abandoned, the revelations a Lazarus might make to us, coming back through the tomb from the Land of Shadows, or a Christ, faint and weary from His Agony and Passion, all these things, enigmatic, and hitherto unspeakable, Rembrandt proclaims to us, with so much insistence as may make them comprehensible, yet with so much reticence as becomes their mystery. All the strength and all the delicacy of sentiments the most diverse found expression in the works of this amazing master, who, even amidst the complexities of his very subtle art, remained so ingenuous, so simple, so profoundly human, and who gave to painting itself something of the palpitating movement and intensity of thought.

In the domain of an art that he renewed and enlarged, Rembrandt embraced all realities and all visions. The unknown and mysterious



Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Study of an Old Man' (about 1630). Red Chalk (Louvre)

elements that brush against us at every turn in life appear in his works, and that mingling of the positive and the spiritual which characterises his art explains the influence it has upon utterly different temperaments. At once supple and dominant, he can express himself with absolute lucidity, and yet, at the same time, leave a great deal to our imaginations. Definite enough to suggest what he wishes, he is yet vague enough to leave us to ourselves afterwards, evoking in us that active collaboration which completes the loftiest creations of art. We do not like to be coerced into approval, and even before masterpieces, we are inclined to defend our freedom to a certain extent. When he has communicated with us, when he has captured us and holds us, Rembrandt leaves us to ourselves. By going further, he would risk the breaking of the spell, and he never oversteps the delicate boundary beyond which he feels that we might escape him altogether. It is in the depths of our own hearts that we hear the supreme words he has hesitated to pronounce. These are methods of expression that are bound up with the deepest and the most irresistible forces of art, that touch our souls with an overmastering eloquence, and that are only possible to genius itself at its best moments.

Rembrandt, as we may easily conceive, was likely to be misapprehended by his contemporaries. He was too personal, too novel, too unexpected, to find a public on his own level as soon as he appeared. As time has gone on, he has made converts in every country and in every camp. He has many claims to the preference of our own period, for he is the most modern of all the great masters, and the fluctuations of taste that have been merciless to many reputations have always spared his, and increased its lustre. His glory is all the greater for its period of eclipse, and the unanimity with which he is acclaimed is but the tardy compensation for the obscurity that overshadowed the close of his life. Dying in poverty, he created, by means of some strips of canvas and paper, a few colours and a point, a fortune that is reckoned in millions. The prices of his works, which have been very high for some time past, increase steadily, and, almost alone among the old masters, he has found favour with a youthful generation by no means catholic in its admiration. Again and again, in these latter years, he has been the subject of costly publications dealing with his life, his works, his friends, and his family, studies in which Dutchmen and foreigners have alike striven to add a little new light to that already diffused by their predecessors. Thus, inspired by the valuable discoveries due to the

researches of Dr. A. Bredius, the distinguished Director of The Hague Museum, Dr. Hofstede de Groot, one of the writers who has done most for the study of Dutch art-history, has just published all the documents relating to Rembrandt that have come down to us, arranged in chronological order, and annotated with no less taste than perspicacity. A young German savant, Mr. Valentiner, studying the work of the master in his turn, has deduced from it a store of very precise details as to his surroundings, his character, his habits, and the persons of his immediate circle, and has thus evolved a sort of autobiography of Rembrandt.

All these critical labours have enabled us to enter gradually into the master's intimate life, to unravel the tangled web of his career, to understand the contradictions of this nature, at once simple and complex—that of a big child, kindly, weak, and incapable of managing his own affairs, and yet that of a marvellous artist, devoting himself with passion to his art, and achieving the full originality of his genius by the most unwearied labour.

In the few pages I have written as a commentary on this series of beautiful reproductions from Rembrandt's masterpieces, I have not attempted a detailed study of the life so intimately bound up with these creations. I shall be content, if, in attempting to emphasise the main features of his great personality, I inspire my readers with some of the admiration I have so long felt for Rembrandt, an admiration which the knowledge of years has only tended to increase.

Paris, 1906. EMILE MICHEL.

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Tobias and his Family with the Angel.' Pen and Wash
(Albertina)

>>>> REMBRANDT HARMENSZ VAN RIJN <<<<

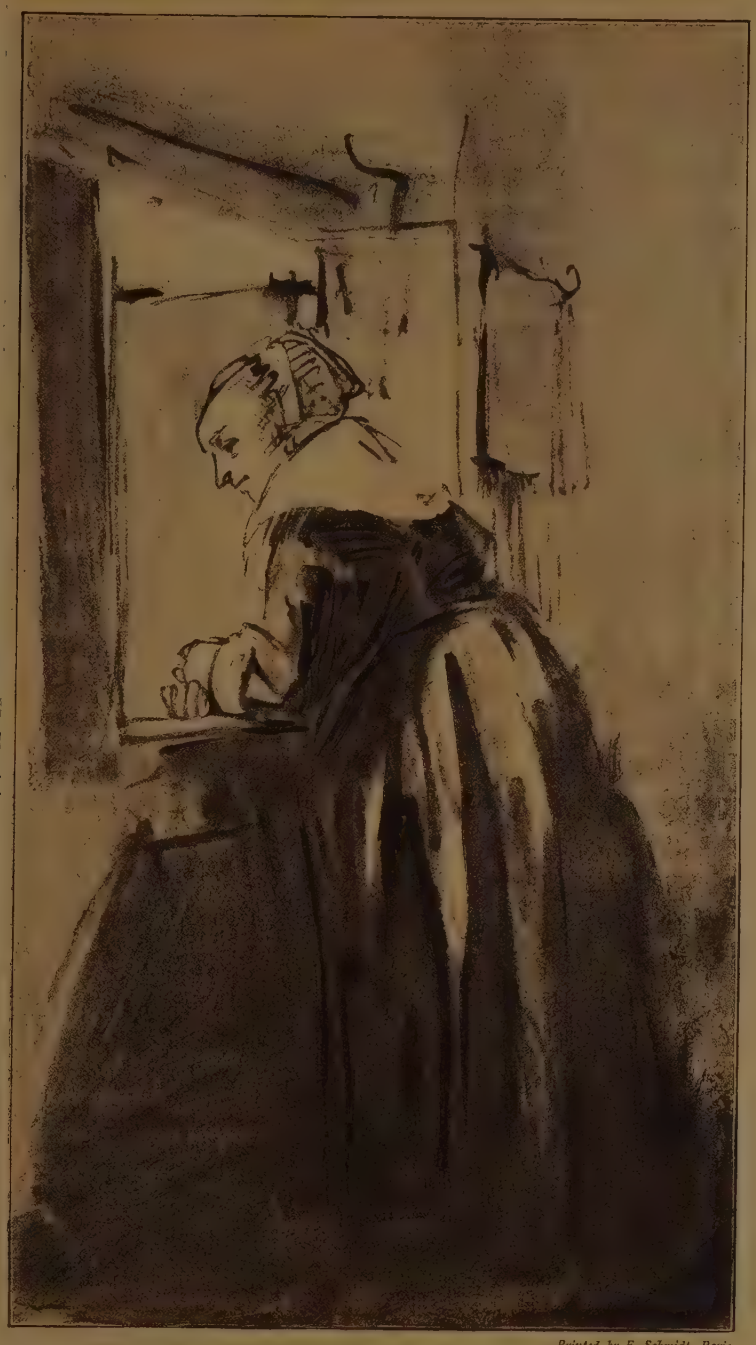
LEYDEN, the city which is about to celebrate Rembrandt's tercentenary, may not only lay proud claim to the honour of having given him birth, but may be said to have specially deserved such an honour. No city in Holland showed greater valour and tenacity in the terrible struggle for national independence. Nor, after the victorious issue of the two sieges in which she so heroically held the Spaniard at bay, was there one which set to work more intelligently to inaugurate the new reign of liberty and patriotic enterprise that was to secure the prosperity of the Netherlands. Already distinguished for her charitable institutions and her commerce, Leyden was soon at the head of the new intellectual movement. We are told that when William of Orange offered to mark his sense of Leyden's services during the war by a temporary remission of taxes, her citizens petitioned for the creation of a University instead. Founded by a decree of 1575, and munificently endowed, this University at once began to attract the most distinguished men of learning of the age—Justus Lipsius, Scaliger, Saumaise, Vossius, Marnix de Ste. Aldegonde, etc.—by the positions it offered them. A botanic garden with hot-houses, a little menagerie stocked by the hardy navigators of Holland, and a theatre of anatomy, where, in spite of the opposition of certain theologians, dissections began to be carried on, were annexed to the University, which, thanks to all these facilities for education, soon found the roll of its students increasing rapidly. Religious tolerance was nobly observed in the city, and the classic editions of great writers published by the Elzeviers were in request throughout Europe.

It was in this favoured spot that Rembrandt was born, on July 15, 1606. He was fifth among the six children of a miller called Harmen Gerritsz, who, when barely twenty years old, had married the daughter of a Leyden baker, on October 8, 1589. The couple had settled on the quay of the Rhine, in a little house which Harmen had bought, together with one-half of a mill adjoining it. The family was of good repute, and in comfortable circumstances, for on the death of Rembrandt's parents their property was valued at 9960 florins, a considerable sum at that period. Their children had received a suitable education, and we find Rembrandt's name entered upon the University lists of May 20, 1620, as a student of Latin literature. But his interest in the humanities, to which his parents may have thought of devoting him, was slight. His handwriting is

legible enough, however, and the few letters by him that have come down to us do not contain a larger percentage of ill-spelt words than those of his most distinguished contemporaries.

His real vocation was manifest in early boyhood, and recognising his aptitudes, his parents removed him from the University, and allowed him to devote his whole time to painting when he was about fifteen. Leyden offered but few facilities to the art student at the time. After a brilliant period, illustrated by the names of Cornelis Engelbrechtsz and, more especially, of Lucas van Leyden, his pupil, important and justly famous examples of whose works were preserved in the Town Hall, painting had made way for science and letters, and the few artists of the city did not even form a group numerous enough to establish a Guild of St. Luke on the lines of those at Haarlem, Delft, or The Hague. But, anxious to keep him near them, Rembrandt's parents apprenticed him to Jacob van Swanenburch, an artist now more or less forgotten, though highly esteemed by his contemporaries. Old friendship, and perhaps some tie of blood, had no doubt something to do with their choice. Though he lacked the sturdy talent of his father, Isaac van Swanenburch (whose remarkable series of pictures representing various processes in the manufacture of woollen stuffs were formerly in the Drapers' Hall, and are now in the Museum), Jacob had one advantage in the eyes of his fellow citizens. He had spent a considerable time in Italy, a distinction much coveted in those days. He had, indeed, married there, and had further been fortunate enough to escape the grip of the Inquisition, whose wrath he had incurred by a picture of witches and devils. The one picture by him which has survived, a 'Papal Procession in the Square of St. Peter's at Rome,' does not give a very exalted idea of his powers, and though Rembrandt stayed with him for three years, he could only, as his earliest biographer, the Burgomaster Orlers, remarks, have learnt the elements of his art from such a master. But the open mind and independent character of the youthful artist made this mediocre instruction a more favourable condition in his case than it would have proved for others. In his immediate surroundings, his native town and its environs, he no doubt found food for observation and study; for such was his progress, says Orlers, that all fellow citizens interested in his future "were amazed, and foresaw the glorious career that lay before him."

We learn further from the somewhat laconic testimony of a journal kept about the year 1628 by a contemporary amateur, Arend van Buchel, that "this miller's son has given reason to hope



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'The Woman at the Window.' Pen and Wash. (Heseltine Collection.)

Portrait of the
Artist
(National Gallery)

The Syndics of the
Cloth Hall
(Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam)

Christ as a Gardener
Appearing to
Mary Magdalene
(Buckingham Palace)

Portrait of a
Lady
(Liechtenstein
Gallery, Vienna)

much of him, though he is perhaps esteemed great somewhat prematurely."

The three years that constituted the normal term of apprenticeship ended, Rembrandt's parents, considering him old enough to leave the shelter of his home, agreed to send him to the studio of Pieter Lastman, a well-known painter of Amsterdam. Perhaps Swanenburch, knowing Lastman had visited Italy like himself, recommended this step, and something may also have been due to the attraction of a young fellow townsman of Rembrandt's, Jan Lievens, who had settled at Amsterdam. Lastman's teaching, more advanced and efficient than that of Swanenburch, was nevertheless a continuation of the same. Both were members of that band of "Italianisers" who had come under the influence of the painter Elsheimer at Rome. Though in no sense a great artist, Elsheimer's very genuine talent, no less than his agreeable manners, made him a distinguished figure in the foreign colony of the city. Lastman had been one of his most fervent disciples, and when, after a sojourn of three or four years in Italy, he returned in 1607 to Amsterdam, the studies and traditions he had brought with him from beyond the Alps formed a stock-in-trade on which he was to rely until his death, treating the same subjects as Elsheimer, and mingling the familiar types and features of his native land with reminiscences of Italian art and nature.

The prestige of the "Italianisers" was very great at that time in Holland, and when Rembrandt arrived at Amsterdam, in 1624, he found it still potent, in spite of the new ideas, which, thanks to a sincere study of Nature, began to prevail. Observant as Rembrandt was of the realities around him, he was nevertheless so strongly influenced by his new master and the doctrines he formulated, that it was long before he escaped altogether from the hold they obtained over his mind.

It was to Lastman that he owed his taste for a conventional picturesqueness and for a so-called local colour which, far from reinforcing the expressive power of a subject, deals solely with externals and results in trivial works utterly devoid of originality. Rembrandt's profound love of Nature never wholly emancipated him from that passion for gewgaws and Oriental frippery which, manifesting itself in his youth, remained with him to his death.

The sacrifices Rembrandt's family had been willing to make for his education could not be prolonged indefinitely, and he himself was eager to return to his home and devote himself to independent work. Barely six months had passed when he came back to Leyden,

determining, as Orlers tells us, "to study and practise painting alone, and in his own manner." But this cherished son had no idea of leading an idle life under the parental roof. He found an inexpensive retreat, where he installed himself very modestly, and the situation of his father's house on the quay of the Rhine no doubt afforded him favourable conditions as regards light. Intent on self-improvement, he took upon himself the responsibility of devising a discipline and methods of study of his own. He felt instinctively that Nature must be his sole guide. But models were not obtainable at Leyden, and however small the outlay necessary to procure them, he could not have afforded to pay them. He accordingly sought them in his own circle, taking first himself, then his father, his mother, his relatives and friends. Among these he was sure of the patience and complaisance that permitted of an endless variety of experiments in the attitudes he made them adopt, and the method of illumination he attempted. Inspired by a passionate devotion to his art, he studied with such ardour that, to quote Houbraken, "he never left his work while daylight lasted."

To this period we must assign several little studies of heads on panel, the attribution of which to Rembrandt was contested long after Dr. Bode had drawn the attention of critics to them, so irreconcilable was such authorship with received opinion, and so little have the works in common with others that followed closely upon them. One of them, representing the young painter himself, is in the Cassel Gallery, and though it bears neither date nor signature, it may be accepted as one of his first pictures. It shows him at about the age of twenty; the face, turned three-quarters to the right, is broad and massive, and stands out in bold relief against a light grey background. The sunlight falls full on the neck, ear, and right cheek, leaving the forehead, the eyes, and the whole of the left side in deep shadow. The ruddy complexion, thick nose, and sturdy neck, the parted lips, above which a soft down appears, the unruly hair, all bespeak health and vigour. The type is that of a young peasant, simple, robust, a trifle uncouth. The broad and summary execution reinforces this impression; the touch is free and dashing, and the hair is drawn with rapid strokes of the butt-end of the brush in the fat impasto. The eyes, though barely visible through the shadow, seem to gaze at the spectator with singular penetration; the contrast of light and shade is very pronounced, but so skilfully is the transition effected by means of an intermediate tone that all hardness is avoided.

'Study of a Couchant Lion.' Pen and Wash
(Lord Brownlow's Collection)

In a small portrait in the Gotha Museum, on which there are still traces of the interlaced R and H, the monogram adopted by Rembrandt at this period, the treatment of chiaroscuro is more discreet and the composition less summary. The gradations of the light are more delicately observed; the touch is freer and lighter; the impasto, though less loaded, is still rich enough to enable the artist to adopt his former device, and the curly hair that waves round the face is drawn with the butt-end of the brush in the moist paint. Other portraits contemporary with these, of Rembrandt's mother, a placid, venerable old woman, or of his father, an old man with a long, bony, wrinkled face, are no less numerous. Sometimes these are treated with a respectful solicitude for the likeness; sometimes the artist is absorbed in the study of light, and arranges his models with a view to variety of illumination. In his most violent contrasts he shows a vague preoccupation with that chiaroscuro which he was finally to use as a means of expression so personal and so original.

But Rembrandt's studies of himself and his parents were not all the work of brush or pencil. His first etchings also date from the beginning of his activity. The workmanship is as yet somewhat coarse, and often shows signs of haste. Gradually, however, he achieved a surer mastery of form, and began to study in his own features the characteristic expressions produced by the most varied emotions. Bareheaded, with dishevelled hair, or with a velvet cap on his head, his hand on his hip, he drapes himself, and poses before his mirror, studying the effects of gaiety, terror, pain, sadness, attention, satisfaction, or anger in his own face.

Such experiments, as may be supposed, had their false and artificial aspects. The mere grimace of expression is sometimes suggested by these pensive airs, haggard eyes, affrighted looks, mouths wide with laughter or contracted by pain. But in all such violent and factitious contrasts Rembrandt sought those essential traits of strong emotion which stamp themselves unequivocally on the human face. By degrees he corrected the exaggerations of this expressive pantomime, till he learned to render alike the deepest and the most transient manifestations of human feeling in their subtlest gradations.

From this time forward, scarcely a year passed without some memorial, painted or engraved, of his own personality. The portraits succeeded one another so rapidly and regularly as to form a complete record of the gradual changes wrought by time, not only in his features, but in the character of his genius.

REMBRANDT

We know not how Rembrandt gained his knowledge of engraving, nor to whom he owed the elements of this art. None of his biographers have thrown any light on this point. At Leyden the works and the memory of that Lucas who, like himself, was a native of the city were still in high repute, and Rembrandt's youthful admiration for the master was so great that he did not hesitate to make personal sacrifices in order to possess a fine set of impressions of his work. Studying these, he found the artist attempting, with extreme simplicity of method, some of those effects of chiaroscuro he himself found so absorbing. Rembrandt's art was destined to show many analogies with that of his famous contemporary. Both alike painters and engravers, they had the same taste for the picturesque, the same fashion of introducing familiar traits in their versions of sacred themes, the same desire to make all the resources of their art contribute to the expression of their thought. But indeed, the technique of Rembrandt's first etchings, consisting for the most part of simple essays with the point, uncomplicated by tone, is not such as to have demanded a very laborious initiation.

NE may imagine that a young artist of such productive energy began early to try his hand at compositions in which, giving freer rein to his imagination, he was able to manifest the creative fire that burned within him. Among the studies we have described above are certain pictures of the same period, and although these over-hasty productions show great inexperience, they are not unworthy of attention. The 'St. Paul in Prison' of the Stuttgart Museum bears the date 1627, together with Rembrandt's signature, and his monogram. The dry handling, the grey colour, and the heaviness of the details proclaim the painter's lack of mastery. And yet the pale sunbeam that lights the cell, the grave, contemplative face of the captive, are the conceptions of no commonplace tyro. Later, in the plenitude of his powers, Rembrandt would no doubt have expressed his idea more perfectly; but even with the halting means at his disposal he is able to convey it to us. The precision of form and the careful execution of accessories—the straw of the dungeon, the great sword and the books at the Apostle's side—bear witness to the conscientious labours of an artist who had studied nature at first hand, and profited by her teaching.

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

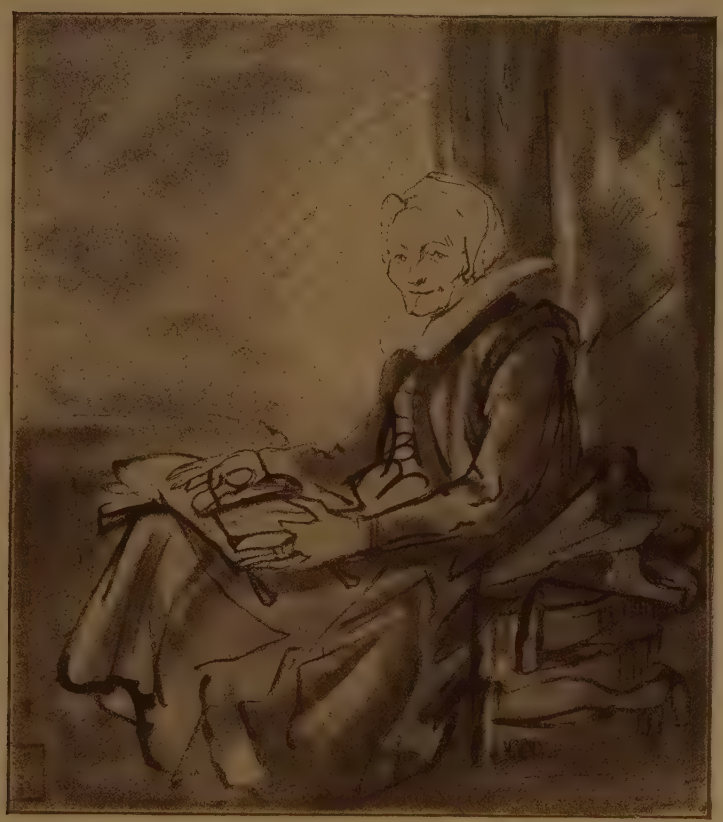
'Life Study of a Young Man.'
Study for the Etching (1646)
Pen and Wash
(Bibliothèque Nationale)

The 'Money-Changer' of the Berlin Museum bears the same date, 1627, and the monogram. An old man, easily recognisable as Rembrandt's father, holds in his left hand a candle, the flame of which he screens with his right, and carefully examines a doubtful coin. Here, again, the handling is somewhat heavy, but the light and the values are happily distributed and truthfully rendered, and the deliberately subdued tints are carefully subordinated to the general effect. Unlike Elsheimer and Honthorst, who in treating such subjects made the actual source of light in all its intensity a main feature of the composition, Rembrandt conceals the flame, and contents himself with rendering the light it sheds on surrounding objects, especially on the very delicately modelled head of the old man.

Several other pictures, the 'Samson Delivered to the Philistines,' dated 1628, also in the Berlin Museum; a 'Presentation in the Temple,' probably of the same year, in the Weber collection at Hamburg; a little 'Denial of St. Peter,' painted on copper; a 'Lot and his Daughters,' and a 'Baptism of the Eunuch,' both of which have disappeared, and are only known to us by Van Vliet's engravings, show us Rembrandt attempting more complicated themes, in which the incompleteness of his studies causes him to fall short of his conceptions. He himself, indeed, was fully conscious of his deficiencies, and, warned by the partial failure of these ambitious attempts, he returned to his experimental studies, or to simpler compositions of single figures, such as the 'St. Jerome Praying,' another work known to us only in Van Vliet's engraving, and the 'St. Anastasius' of 1631 in the Stockholm Gallery. For these compositions he prepared by drawings, the grace, facility and correctness of which attest the precocious dexterity of the young master. He needed the support he found in these studies. When he attempted to dispense with nature's help, the results were far from satisfactory. The artist, who afterwards took advantage of the visit of some travelling menagerie to make studies of lions in a great variety of attitudes, found it no easy matter to draw the one he has placed beside his 'St. Jerome'—a crouching beast with a strange head, half cat, half dog, but by no means leonine. On the other hand, the bowl, the rosary, the scarf, the gourd, and the mat, disposed around the kneeling saint, are rendered with the most minute realism. It was necessary that he should have his models ready to his hand, as far as possible, that he might consult them after his own fashion, and as, like his master Lastman, he loved to take his subjects from the East, he sought to

surround himself with the accessories on which he relied for local colour. His slender earnings were spent in the purchase of such rare or curious objects, and this mania for collecting, an innate tendency, gradually became more and more pronounced—its justification in the artist's mind being, that he deemed the increase of these 'properties' essential to his work. He was thus incessantly tempted to add to the nucleus of his future collections. By drawing upon it, he was enabled to adorn the personages of his Scriptural compositions, to furnish their interiors, to surround them with trinkets and accessories. Even at this early stage we find in his pictures and etchings a number of objects he had collected, and introduced repeatedly: rich stuffs, gaily coloured scarves, a velvet table-cover with gold embroideries, a fur-trimmed cloak; or, again, weapons, a helmet, a shield, a huge two-handed sword, a quiver, a Javanese dagger, and the steel gorget we shall so often note ; or jewels, perhaps, and plate, a metal bowl and ewer, pearl earrings, gold chains which he throws round the necks of models or uses to fasten the plumes of their head-gear; or such humble 'properties' as we have enumerated in the 'St. Jerome,' and the folios and parchments of St. Paul's dungeon, and the Money-changer's den.

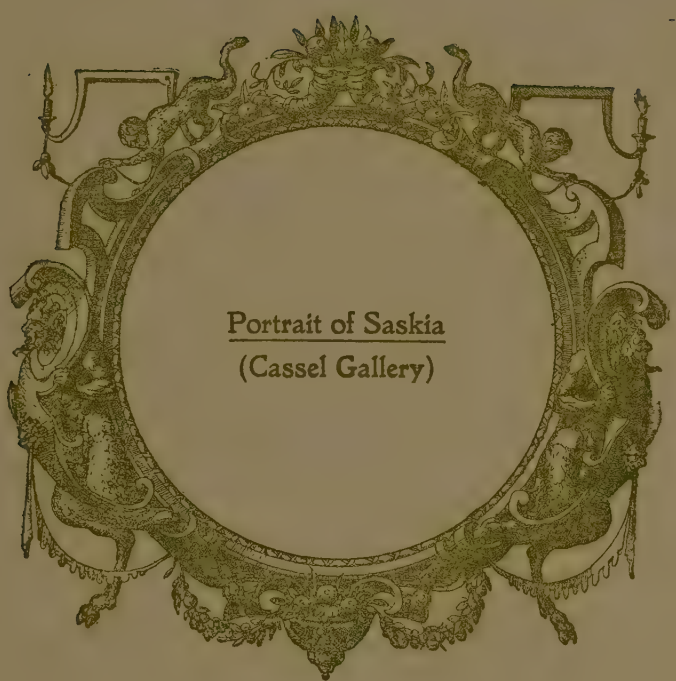
With such accessories, as Dr. Bredius remarks, Rembrandt composed veritable still-life pieces, somewhat in the manner of the so-called 'Vanitas' pictures which artists such as Jan Davidsz de Heem and Pieter Potter were then painting at Leyden. The sober harmonies of these works pleased the literary men of the city, who hung them in their studies. Eager to improve himself, the young painter, no doubt, also began to buy engravings and a few pictures by artists then living at Leyden, with whom he may have been on terms of friendship—Jan Pynas, the marine painter Jan Percellis, and perhaps even Van Goyen, who paid several visits to the town between 1619 and 1631. Rembrandt was no recluse at this time, and a band of young men gathered round him, sharing his studious life and absorbed in problems and researches akin to those that engrossed him. Among these companions of his youth, Lievens was the one most congenial to him, both on account of his age and of a similarity of tastes. After studying under Lastman, like himself, Lievens had also returned to his family at Leyden. Like Rembrandt, he was trying to find his true path, and for the moment, like his young comrade, he was attracted by the study of those effects of light which occur in the etchings and pictures he produced at this period. Another of their fellow citizens, rather younger than themselves,



Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Portrait of a Woman, seated.' Pen and Sepia. (Heseltine Collection)

Portrait
of Rembrandt
(Liechtenstein
Gallery, Vienna)



Portrait of Saskia
(Cassel Gallery)

The Night Watch
(Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam)

Portrait of a Rabbi
(Buckingham Palace)

Gerard Dou, born in 1613, was soon to join them. His father, after having made trial of several other callings for him, finally consented to his becoming a painter, and entrusted his artistic training to Rembrandt. This choice of a master scarcely older than the pupil is significant, and shows the consideration already enjoyed by Rembrandt in his native town. A mediocre and very unequal engraver also worked in company with this little group. The quality of Joris van Vliet's works would hardly have preserved him from oblivion had he not left us reproductions of several pictures by Rembrandt which have disappeared, and are known to us only by his engravings.

Rembrandt was the life and soul of this busy, eager band, which soon began to attract attention even outside Leyden, as we learn from the precious document in Constantijn Huygens' autobiography, written probably between 1629 and 1631, and discovered in 1891 by Dr. J. A. Worp of Groningen. Describing his own education, a very elaborate one, Huygens refers to contemporary artists he had known and admired in his youth. What he says of Rembrandt and of Lievens refers to their youth also, for he describes them as "still beardless, and, judging from their youthful mien and countenances, rather boys than young men," yet already famous. Huygens considers that "Rembrandt surpasses Lievens in intelligence and passion. . . . Such is his talent that even in the limited dimensions he prefers, he shows expressive power that might be sought in vain in the vaster compositions of other artists. I desire no further proof of this," continues Huygens, "than his picture of 'Judas Bringing Back the Thirty Pieces of Silver to the High Priest,'" in which picture he calls attention more especially to "the central figure of Judas, beside himself, bewailing his crime, imploring the pardon he dares not hope for, his face a vision of horror, his hair in wild disorder, his clothes rent . . . cowering on his knees, his whole body ravaged and convulsed by a hideous despair." Contrasting this figure with the amenities of classical antiquity, Huygens takes one of those oratorical flights dear to the writers of his day, defying Parrhasius, Apelles, the masters of all ages, to equal the expressive power displayed by "this Batavian, this miller, this stripling." He concludes by regretting that these gifted youths should not care to visit Italy, where they might by study attain to the very summit of their art. But to this they object that they have not time now, at their most fruitful season of work, to go in search of masterpieces scattered throughout the peninsula, and that it is possible to see excellent

specimens of Italian art outside Italy. Huygens, indeed, admits that he has rarely seen ardour and industry equal to that of these young men, who deny themselves even the innocent pleasures of their age. He wishes, however, that "they were more inclined to spare their somewhat fragile bodies, which have already suffered from the sedentary life they lead." We cannot but remark that the coarse handling and the exaggerated pantomime of the figures in this 'Judas' by no means justify Huygens' extravagant eulogies. Many of Rembrandt's works of the same period are infinitely superior.

The 'Presentation in the Temple' of The Hague, dated 1631, and therefore later by two years than the 'Judas,' marks, indeed, a decisive advance in his development. I need not describe the rich details of the composition, which are admirably displayed in our reproduction. All the grandeur of the scene is brought into relief, and the Temple, with its vast proportions, its colonnade and gilded capitals, forms a magnificent setting for the episode. The figures are treated with supreme skill and delicacy. The light serves to concentrate our attention upon them, and it is hard to conceive of a personality more touching than that of the Virgin, or more venerable than that of Simeon. Radiant with all the joy of faith realised, the aged servant beholds his long-expected Saviour. His hour has come, and he can depart in peace.

We can imagine the immediate success of works so far in advance of anything as yet achieved in the school, so personal, so novel, and so human! The reputation of their author began to spread into the neighbouring cities; it soon reached Amsterdam, whence he had already received commissions for a few portraits. Amateurs sought to attract him thither by the prospect of disposing of his pictures to greater advantage, and also of meeting with more numerous and more enlightened admirers of his talent. Rembrandt's visits to Amsterdam became frequent. During these sojourns he lodged with a certain art dealer called Hendrick van Uylenborch, with whom he soon formed a friendship that proved enduring. It is probable that Uylenborch introduced patrons, and also furnished some of the curiosities bought by Rembrandt for his collections. The painter proved his confidence in his friend by advancing him a sum of 1000 florins, no doubt a part of his first earnings, and in a deed attested before an Amsterdam notary on June 20, 1631, Hendrick agreed to repay the loan in a year, on condition that he should be served with a quarter's notice of the claim.

The constant journeys to Amsterdam necessitated by commissions

Printed by F. Schmitt, Paris.

'Portrait of a Man.' Red and Black Chalk. (Late Holford Collection)

for portraits in the capital became at last so irksome and fatiguing that Rembrandt made up his mind to settle in the city. The well-being of his family was assured. On the death of his father, who was buried on April 27, 1630, in the church of St. Peter, his mother had inherited a sum sufficient for her maintenance, and his unmarried sister, Lysbeth, undertook the care of her. Rembrandt's brothers had chosen callings which made them independent, with the one exception of the eldest, Adriaen, who had been disabled by an accident, and to whom an annuity of 125 florins had been allotted out of the common heritage. He therefore had no pressing family ties in Leyden, and though the separation gave him pain, he made up his mind to quit his native town in 1631. On March 8 of this year his name still figures in a census of its inhabitants, but it is probable that he was settled at Amsterdam before the end of the year. In any case, an affidavit of June 26, 1632, certifies that he was then living with Hendrick Uylenborch, in a house in the Breestraat. He himself answered the questions on this point in the affirmative, adding joyously that he was, "thank God, in good health and well-to-do."

Such, indeed, is the impression the portraits of himself at this period give us. First in order is that in The Hague Museum, painted about 1629–1630, a charming adolescent head, instinct with vigour and intelligence, and with a certain indescribable air of authority, which explains the ascendancy this youth had acquired over his contemporaries at such an early age. An etching of 1631 confirms this impression of power and confidence. The features are firmer, the expression more virile. Draped in a rich cloak of damask silk, his hand on his hip, Rembrandt's bearing is that of a man confident in his star, and conscious of his powers, advancing boldly on the path of life. The period of study and meditation spent in his home circle at Leyden had been a fruitful one in his development. He had learnt to love Nature more and more, to see her with his own eyes, and to interpret her by very individual methods. In spite of the fascination Italy exercised over the minds of artists, in spite of the advice and the alluring descriptions of his masters, he resisted the current that bore so many of his contemporaries across the Alps. Living quietly, absorbed in study, he contented himself with the humble models he found ready to his hand, and created a method and processes at his own peril. In the new field to which his precocious success was drawing him, he was about to find larger scope for those dim aspirations that were stirring within him; but he would never

lose his hold of that firm support which a close and penetrating study of Nature was to afford him. Steadfast of purpose, and ready to sacrifice everything to his art, he would never falter on the path he had marked out for himself.

TOWARDS the year 1630, Amsterdam, thanks to its geographical situation and the enterprise of its inhabitants, had become the centre of a movement and an expansion to which there are few parallels in history. The activity that reigned in the city amazed the strangers who visited it, and Descartes, who lived there from 1629 to 1632, has left a significant testimony to the astonishment aroused in him by the daily spectacle, in a letter to Balzac of May 15, 1631. The commercial wealth that flowed into the city soon transformed it externally, and internally the ideas of religious tolerance that began to prevail effected profound modifications. The Jewish families driven by persecution from Portugal had been cordially received in the Dutch capital, and formed a distinguished section of the population. Like their prototypes of Florence and Venice, the great merchants of Amsterdam were ambitious to distinguish themselves by the refinement of their taste, while on all questions of public polity, a deep sense of solidarity united all classes in labour for the common weal. Numerous charitable institutions, carefully organised and administered, bore witness to the intelligent benevolence of the citizens, which, manifesting itself in a great variety of forms, bound together the different classes of society.

As may be supposed, the spirit of liberty which had achieved such great things in politics exercised the happiest influence in the domain of literature and science. Though Amsterdam could not boast a University like Leyden, she could show writers and savants of the first rank. The poetry of Hooft, Vondel, and Cats is inspired by the most generous enthusiasms. It is true that a certain coarseness mingled with the urbanity of the intellectual; but this coarseness, which reigned even in the most aristocratic circles, was pardonable in Holland, a country just emerging from the stress of national conflict. Her vigorous and hitherto somewhat uncultured sons had had little opportunity of acquiring reticence and delicacy of manners in the camp, on the sea, or from the controversial pamphlets of her theologians and politicians. It is not surprising, therefore, that their

Study for 'The Philosopher' in the Louvre (1633). Red Chalk (Berlin Print Room)

amusements were marked by a certain grossness. Although the national demeanour was as a rule calm and deliberate, yet there were times when this staid people threw off all restraint and gave themselves up to a very Saturnalia of riotous animation. At the 'kermesse' and in the theatre a kind of frenzy seemed to transform the sober populace. At family gatherings, people whose normal habits were sober and temperate became, for the nonce, eaters and drinkers of Gargantuan capacity. But such occasions were clearly exceptional, and the manifest sincerity of the Dutch painters has furnished less damaging records of contemporary life.

It is by her painters, indeed, rather than her writers, that Holland is famous in history, and at this moment painting was at its apogee in Amsterdam. Her Guild of St. Luke was always, it is true, a somewhat miscellaneous company, which never achieved the importance and cohesion of those of Utrecht, The Hague, Delft, or Haarlem. But gradually the Northern Athens, as her writers called her, attracted the majority of the famous masters formed in the sister cities. It was at Amsterdam that the population was most numerous and most wealthy, and here artists found the best and readiest market for their wares. The portrait-painters were at the head of the school, and all professions and classes figure in the vast iconography they have left us. The demand for religious pictures had ceased when the Catholic religion had disappeared. Those princes of the house of Orange who took an interest in the arts were inclined to favour the Flemish masters, such as Rubens and Vandyck, whose subjects were of a loftier order than those of their Dutch 'confrères,' and who therefore enjoyed greater popularity among the educated classes. The absolute sincerity of the Dutch painters and the novelty of their aims, incomprehensible at first, even to the more enlightened, by no means made for their success. Many of them lived and died miserably, neglected by their contemporaries. The shrewder among them supplemented their art by some more lucrative calling.

It is the glory of these men that, seeking a higher satisfaction than the suffrages of the crowd, they found in the life and nature around them the elements of an entirely original art. The great revolution accomplished, the Dutch, "a race of traders," as Fromentin eloquently puts it, "practical, industrious, unimaginative, without a touch of mysticism, frugal in habits, and essentially anti-Latin in intellect, its traditions overthrown, its worship stripped of imagery, seeking an art congenial to its taste and appropriate to its conditions—such a race turned almost involuntarily to a 'genre' at once bold and simple, in

which it had excelled for fifty years already, and demanded portraits from its painters."[1]

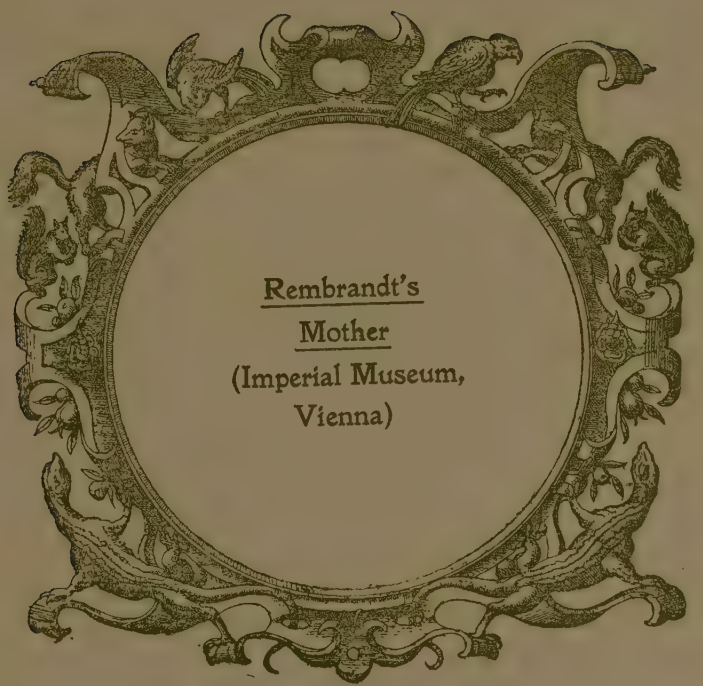
Rembrandt both conformed to the national programme and went immeasurably beyond it. In this brief sketch we have tried to suggest the centre in which he was about to live, in order to give an idea of the influences brought to bear upon him, his gradual emancipation from them, and the final triumph of his originality. We have seen that on his arrival at Amsterdam, he had at first accepted the hospitality of his friend Hendrick van Uylenborch, with whom he had lodged on former occasions. It is probable that his stay was brief, for one of his independent temper must have felt the need of a home of his own, where he could give himself up entirely to his work. This he found in the west of the town, on the Bloemengracht, in a warehouse spacious enough for a studio, where he could pose his models conveniently, under favourable conditions as to light. The commissions for portraits which he received occupied most of his time, though there was no lack of painters who had distinguished themselves in this branch of art, the more remarkable among Rembrandt's immediate predecessors being Cornelis van der Voort, Werner van Valckert, Nicolas Elias, and, above all, Thomas de Keyser. A master of every resource of his art, this artist, who was from thirty-four to thirty-five years old at the time of Rembrandt's arrival, combined impeccable drawing and pleasant colour with the flexibility of a technique at once rich and restrained. His dignity and exquisite sobriety of style fairly entitle him to rank among the greatest of the Dutch painters, side by side with Hals and immediately after Rembrandt, the one master who surpassed them both.

But before he could be accounted De Keyser's rival, the younger master had still much to learn from him. Hitherto he had dealt with his models according to his fancy. His sitters had been mainly his own relatives and friends. Their preferences had not to be reckoned with, and, intent on his own conceptions and the advantage of experiment, he had indulged in every freak of illumination, attitude, and costume that occurred to him. Working for strangers, he had now to renounce all such fantasies, to content himself with the habitual sobriety of Dutch costume, and to make faithful likenesses of his sitters. He had to familiarise himself with the lives of those persons of various ages and conditions who looked to him for faithful transcripts of their individuality. Under these novel conditions, he had to measure himself with rivals who had met and overcome the

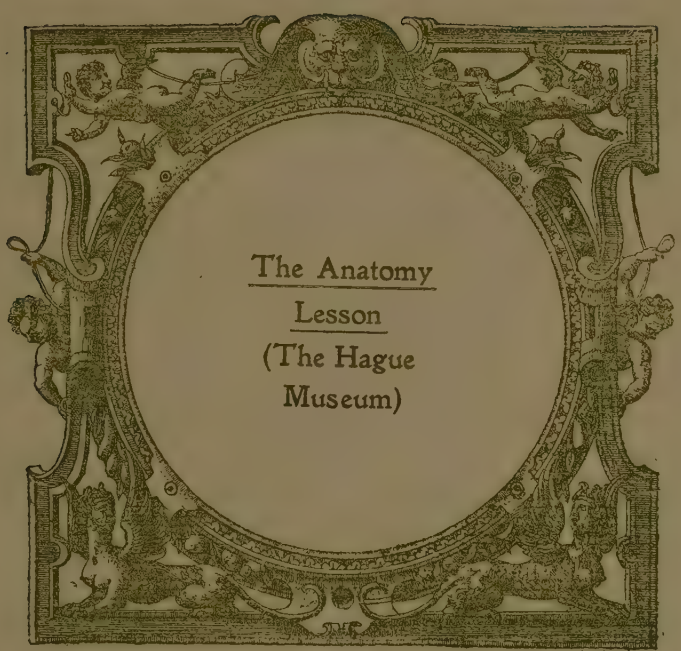
[1] 'Les Maîtres d'Autrefois,' p. 172.

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

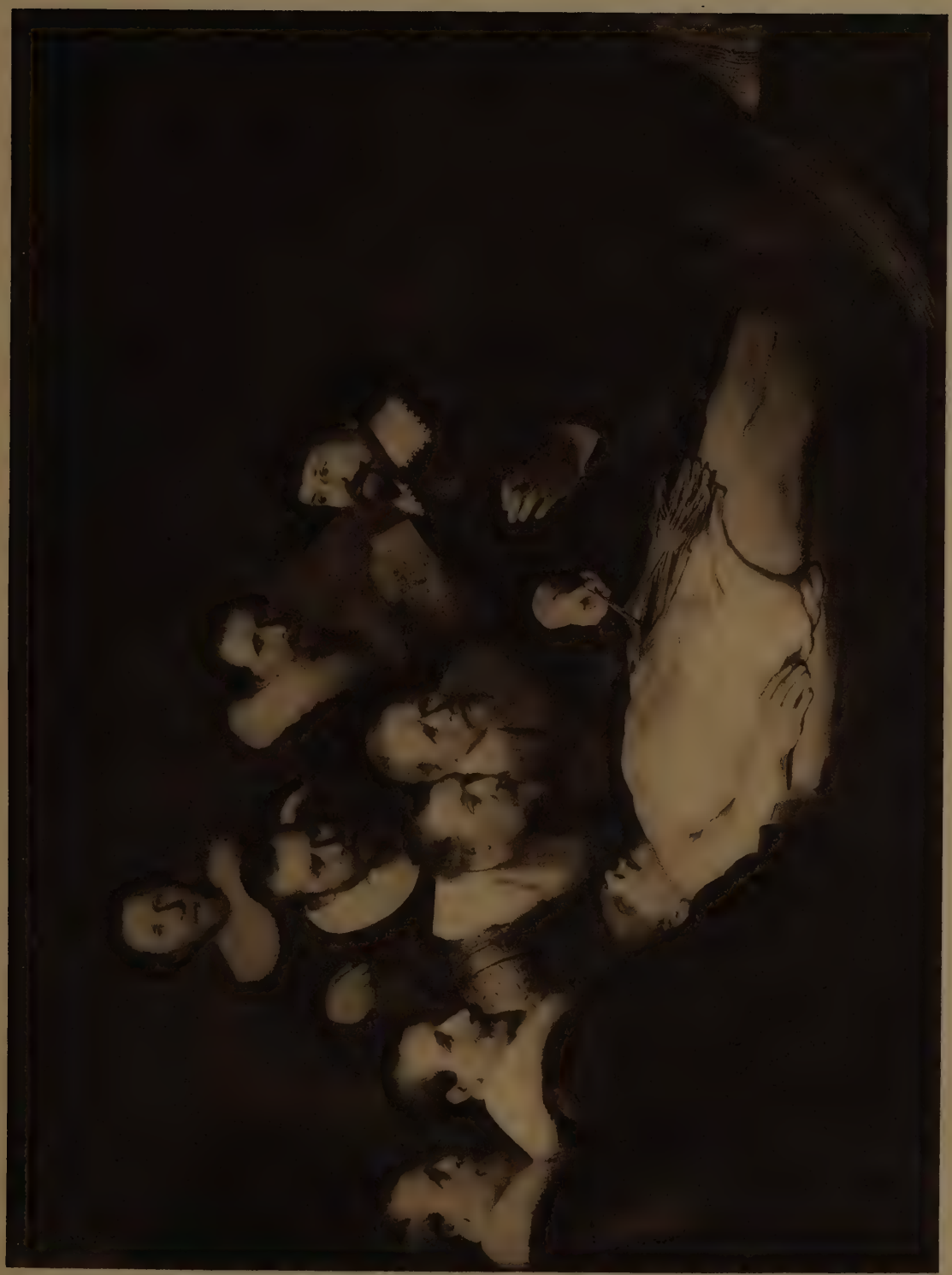
'The Return of the Prodigal.' Pen and Bistre. (Teyler Museum)



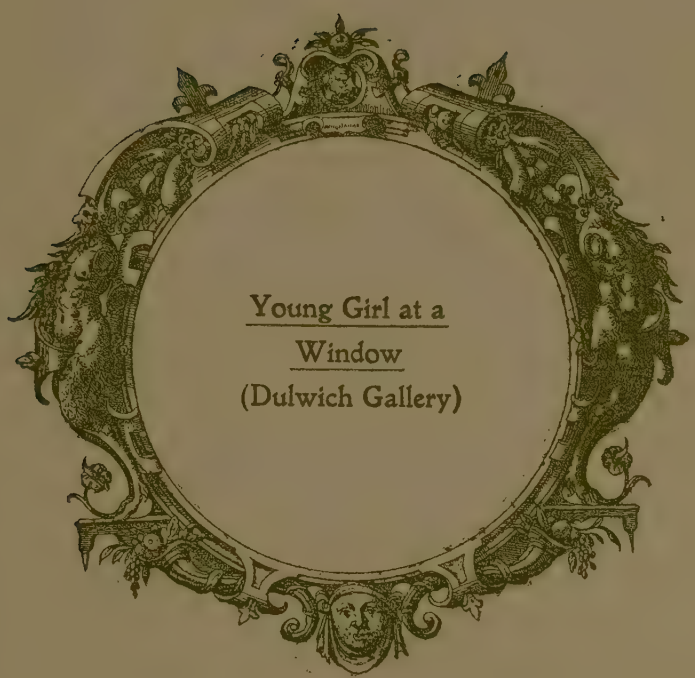
Rembrandt's
Mother
(Imperial Museum,
Vienna)



The Anatomy
Lesson
(The Hague
Museum)



Portrait of
Bruyningh
(Cassel Gallery)



Young Girl at a
Window
(Dulwich Gallery)

difficulties that confronted him. Rembrandt accepted the contest, and biding his time for the full manifestation of his genius, he resolved that, in talent at least, he would not fall short of the most accomplished of his brethren. Setting aside his own tastes and fancies, he submitted to the wholesome discipline of a strict fidelity to nature. It is edifying to see with what courage and tenacity this youth, naturally ardent and impassioned, bent his neck to the yoke.

The earnestness with which the young master set himself to grasp realities is characteristic of the first portraits he painted at this period. The drawing in these is carefully studied; the touch, sedate, conscientious, almost timid, models by means of soft and very delicate half-tones, closely juxtaposed. However great his facility may have been, Rembrandt was certainly unsparing of his labour. Houbraken tells us that before attacking the canvas itself, he made numerous sketches, eager above all to decide upon the attitude he would adopt and the effect he would aim at, and thus to avoid those vacillations which detract from the value of a picture when the artist yields to them in the course of his work. Work at once so careful and so brilliant must have won the approval both of artists and public. Among the portraits dated 1632 there is one of Maurice Huygens (Hamburg Museum), the brother of Constantijn; one of the calligrapher Coppenol carefully cutting a pen, and absorbed in the importance of the operation; another small portrait in the Hermitage which bears the same name, though we fail to recognise the same sitter; the 'Martin Looten' of the Holford Collection, and others in the museums of Vienna and New York.

An ardent worker, Rembrandt employed all the leisure moments his portraits left him in life-studies, by which he sought instruction and improvement. His models were sometimes naked young men, of whom he made delicate pen-and-ink drawings, relieved by slight washes; another favourite model was an old man, from whom he painted a variety of studies marked by a peculiar force and vigour of modelling; examples of these are to be found in the galleries at Cassel, Metz, and Stockholm.

Feminine models were more difficult to obtain, and such as he managed to procure were distinguished neither by grace nor beauty. It would not be easy to imagine types more vulgar than those of the harsh-featured wench he etched under the very unjustifiable title of the 'Bathing Diana,' the 'Danaë' and the 'Potiphar's Wife,' whose brutal contours he has rendered with such lamentable mastery, abating nothing of their repulsive ugliness.

In compensation, however, for these difficulties he now received an important commission from the distinguished Doctor Tulp, a man no less remarkable for his virtue than for his learning. The 'Anatomy Lesson,' ordered by Tulp in 1632, was to be presented to the Guild of Surgeons, the meetings of which were held until 1639 in premises above the Meat Market, and afterwards in a hall in the St. Anthony Gate, where Rembrandt's picture was subsequently placed. The subject was one which Rembrandt's predecessors, Aert Pietersen, Michiel Mierevelt, Thomas de Keyser and Nicolas Elias, had repeatedly attempted. A symmetry, or a disorder equally disastrous from the artistic point of view, had hitherto characterised the group of auditors, more or less indifferent, which these artists placed round a professor and the corpse on which he was demonstrating, nor had they spared the spectator any one of the unnecessary and even repulsive details proper to such a scene. Though Rembrandt's composition is not faultless, and exception may justly be taken to the awkward effect of the pyramidal grouping, it is remarkable for its clarity, its earnestness, the rapt attention of the students, and, above all, the intelligent and commanding figure of Tulp, who stands full in the light, making an anatomical demonstration.

Rembrandt, drawing inspiration from the realities of his theme, has given it a most eloquent significance. Without recourse to empty allegory, he personified Science in the men of his own country and times, and characterised it, not by abstractions, but by showing it engaged on the grave problems that are the object of its studies. Approaching those contemporary subjects he had not as yet essayed, he renewed them at the first attempt, enlarging their perspective. Historically—and this gives some idea of its importance—this picture marks an epoch, not only in Rembrandt's career, but in the art of his country.

When the Dutch, in their new-born independence, were anxious to set the national 'imprimatur' on every manifestation of their originality, the 'Anatomy Lesson' gave, as it were, a supreme consecration to the art that had sprung from the travail of the people.

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

Study for the 'Old Man Studying'
(About 1629–1630.) Red Chalk and Wash. (Louvre)

REMBRANDT'S success was brilliant, and his name, already well known in Amsterdam, was soon famous. In 1632 he had painted barely ten portraits; from 1633 to 1634 he executed over forty. Houbraken tells us that the clients who gave him commissions had often to wait a long time for their turn, and that would-be sitters "had not only to pay, but to pray" for their portraits. His manner became broader and freer, though he abated nothing of the sincerity and conscientious care that had made his reputation. These portraits were sometimes of single figures, such as that of an aristocratic young man (Comte de Pourtalès' collection) and that of the poet J. Krul (Cassel Gallery); sometimes pendants, the portraits of a wife and a husband, like those of the Henri Péreire collection and the Wallace Museum; sometimes a married couple grouped together, like the 'Wealthy Pair,' in Mrs. Gardner's collection in America, and, notably, the 'Shipbuilder and his Wife' at Buckingham Palace, where we are shown the sitters in their modest home, the husband with a compass in his hand, turning to his wife, who hands him a letter; two worthy persons, who have grown old together, and sharing joys and sorrows throughout a long life have learned mutual confidence and esteem. Rembrandt seems to have been touched by their affection, so sympathetic and expressive is his rendering of the pair. The firm yet supple handling, the warm, subdued light, the transparent shadows, are all in exquisite harmony with the homely scene, and attune the spectator's mind to fuller sympathy with the old couple. By thus enlarging the scope of portraiture, the artist used the one figure to complete the other, bringing out the moral resemblance of man and wife, and giving us, as it were, an abstract of these two lives, which, thanks to his genius, are as closely associated in our memories as in fact. When he had been barely two years in Amsterdam, Rembrandt had already found patrons in every rank of society. Theologians, doctors, magistrates, poets, statesmen and merchants, plain burghers and young patricians, venerable matrons and fashionable ladies, persons of the most diverse temperaments, ages and conditions, succeeded one another in his studio. Great as was his delight in fantastic costumes, plumes, weapons and foreign stuffs, he accepted the uncompromising actuality of Dutch costume, the austerity of its sombre colours and more or less uniform design. But small as is the licence allowed by such raiment, there are differences in the wearing of it from which the tastes and habits of a life may be inferred. A subtle art reveals

itself in these delicate gradations with which the painter has to deal, and manifests its infinity of resource. As in the costume of his sitters, so in their attitudes and gestures Rembrandt observed the sobriety proper to the painter of an undemonstrative race. Simple, natural and reticent, he yet contrives to pose his models in a manner appropriate to their dispositions and callings, relying for animation on the characteristic traits of their bearing and their faces, and insisting chiefly upon these. He was now a consummate master of every secret of his art—truth of perspective, correctness of drawing, vigour of modelling, the differentiation of surfaces by handling, harmony of colour, and a perfect comprehension of chiaroscuro—and it was by the close union of all the elements of his technique that he was able to render the personality of his sitters with such vitality. In common with all the great masters of portraiture, he recognised in the eyes and mouth the most significant features of the human face, the features which best reveal the expression of life and the process of thought, reflecting the various impressions that traverse a human soul. The studies of physiognomy Rembrandt had made in his Leyden days, taking himself for his model and noting in his own features the somewhat exaggerated modifications produced by the simulation of emotion, were of necessity restricted and superficial. He was now able to extend them, and to make them on a broader and profounder basis by means of the various types which followed one upon the other in his studio. He excels in rendering the infinite variety of temperament he notes in them, the sharp contrasts or delicate analogies they present. The eyes are specially characteristic in his portraits. While the likeness is evidently closely studied, his personages are distinguished by a mysterious and transparent profundity of gaze, inviting us to a closer and more lingering study of their individuality. It is this which makes it impossible to forget some of these portraits. We carry away a most vivid impression of them; and yet, when we see them again, they have always some fresh revelation for us; superb as they may have seemed to us in retrospect, they surpass our expectations each time we return to them.

We may imagine how sustained was the effort demanded by such work. But Rembrandt's independent nature made it impossible for him to give himself up to slavish toil. At times he felt an irresistible impulse to satisfy his imaginative cravings, and a certain part of his time was reserved for the exercises they demanded. The strange and fantastic compositions which were the outcome of

Landscape Study. Pen and Wash
(British Museum)

his inexperience were now succeeded by others in which he gave the measure of his progress with less of effort. True, the fashion in which he treats the 'Rape of Proserpine' (Berlin Museum) is somewhat disconcerting; but the contrast of the flowery plains, where the young girl has been surprised with her companions, and the region of shadows towards which the black steeds are bearing her in wild career, urged on by her ravisher, is expressed with a savage poetry. Again, in the 'Christ Sleeping during the Storm' (Mrs. Gardner's collection)—a picture already famous in the time of Houbraken, who extols its dramatic expression and delicate finish—the eloquent intervention of nature and the important part attributed to it by Rembrandt are novel in his work. The sullen sky, illuminated by a sinister gleam of light, the raging sea with the livid breakers that threaten the frail vessel, the fury of the conspiring elements, and the terror of the bewildered disciples, give a marvellous impressiveness to the serenity of the Saviour, sleeping through the tumult.

From these animated episodes Rembrandt turned, as if for repose, to very calm and simple subjects, such as 'The Philosopher' in the Louvre, attracted, no doubt, by the difference of the problem they presented. In a cell-like interior, the walls of which are gilded by the setting sun, an old man is seated near a window in a contemplative attitude, his clasped hands on his lap. His venerable face, the subdued tints of his draperies, the softness of the fading light, the transparent delicacy of the deepening shadows, make up a subtle and distinguished harmony that charms us by its indefinable poetry.

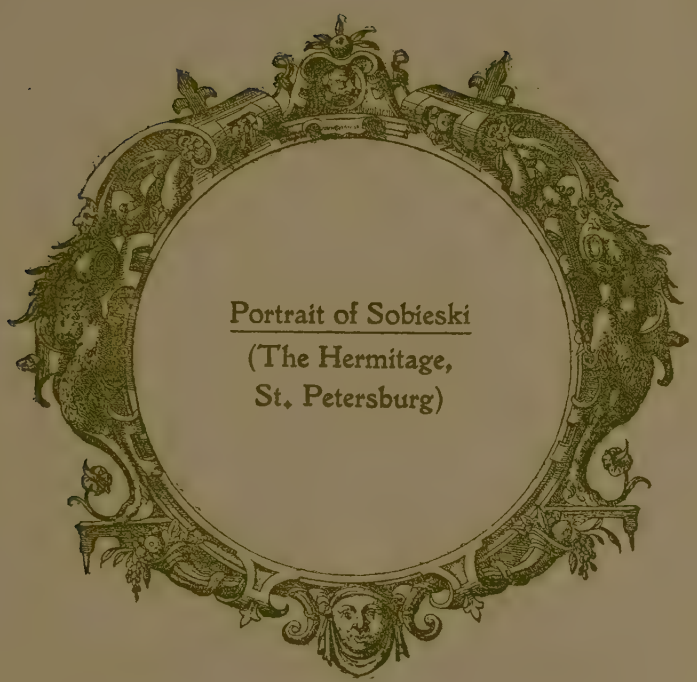
There is little, indeed, in common between these delicate modulations and the violent and abrupt effects Rembrandt had at first essayed. Presaging the vast resources his knowledge of chiaroscuro would place at his disposal, he applied himself henceforth to the rendering of those almost imperceptible gradations which mark the transition from light to shadow. Drawing no longer presented itself to him in its accepted character—a somewhat abstract method of presenting objects within the dry delimitations of a rigid continuous line. To him it became a vivid means of modelling them, of giving relief to their forms, by veiling the contours here and there, and emphasising them the more vigorously in the prominent surfaces. But it was in the domain of composition that chiaroscuro afforded him discoveries even more original and unexpected. There is, indeed, no element of the picturesque more expressive, nor any which lends itself

to a greater variety of combinations. Thanks to this faculty for extending and restricting at will the field and the intensity of light, he was able to bring out the most striking aspects of a subject, and to subordinate its details with a view to their respective importance and the general harmony.

It was just at this epoch that Rembrandt found an opportunity of making experiments, to which he attached the utmost importance, on these lines. His growing fame and recent successes were crowned by a series of important purchases and commissions on behalf of the Stathouder of Holland, Prince Frederick Henry, whose secretary, Constantijn Huygens, acted as the Prince's intermediary. Huygens, as we have seen, was very favourably disposed towards the young artist, for whom he had predicted a brilliant future at the very outset of his career. The 'Scenes of the Passion,' acquired successively for Frederick Henry by Huygens, and discussed in a series of letters exchanged between the latter and Rembrandt, are five in number: 'The Crucifixion,' 'The Descent from the Cross,' 'The Entombment,' 'The Resurrection,' and 'The Ascension,' and their execution occupied five years, from 1633 to 1638. They are now in the Munich Pinacothek. All have darkened very much, and their general condition is far from satisfactory. In these, as in all his religious compositions, Rembrandt adhered as closely as possible to the sacred story. But in spite of the individual beauties of each of these works, in their present state they cannot be ranked among the artist's masterpieces. His anxiety to please the Prince, and to justify the honour done to himself, perhaps tempted him to multiply figures and contrasts in works the limited scale of which unfitted them for such complexity of treatment and such vigour of antithesis. He seems to have been, perhaps unconsciously, haunted by reminiscences of the Italian masters who had treated these lofty themes before him; but in their passage through his Dutch imagination they lost something of the grandeur and beauty we admire in the artists of the Renaissance. Though he astounds us by the originality of his combinations, Rembrandt does not move us here as he was to do in his later dealings with kindred episodes, or as he had already done in homelier scenes more in harmony with his tastes and preoccupations.

In the absence of his characteristic excellences, the defects of these pictures, their eccentricities and vulgarities, the bewildering array of details with which they are crowded, become very apparent. Yet the artist's sincerity is beyond question, and as he himself says in one of

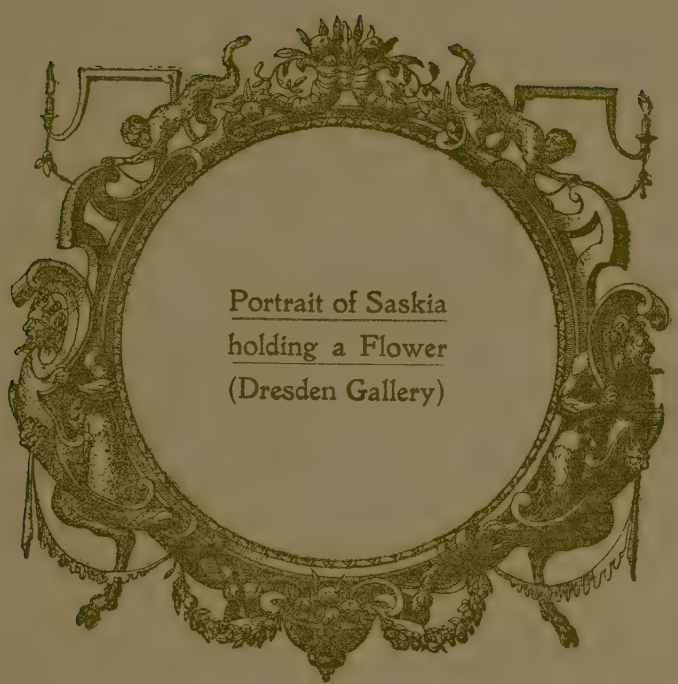
Study for the 'Saint Jerome' (1631)
Red and Black Chalk. (Louvre)



Portrait of Sobieski
(The Hermitage,
St. Petersburg)

Portrait of an
Old Lady
(National Gallery,
London)

The Flight into Egypt
(National Gallery,
Dublin)



Portrait of Saskia
holding a Flower
(Dresden Gallery)

his letters, he believed he had put into these works "as much of life and reality as possible." The time was to come when, preserving all his "reality," he would deal more effectively with the picturesque and emotional aspects of such scenes.

FROM the year 1632 onwards, we note the appearance in Rembrandt's works of a graceful, fair-haired young girl, Saskia van Uylenborch, who was destined to play an important part in his life. His acquaintance with Saskia was probably due to her cousin, Hendrick van Uylenborch, with whom, as we know, the master was on friendly terms. Born at Leeuwarden in 1612, Saskia was the ninth child of a wealthy patrician family of Friesland. An orphan at an early age, she had made her home with one or the other of her married sisters successively, and finally with a cousin, married to the minister Jan Sylvius, who had settled at Amsterdam in 1610. It was at Sylvius' house that the artist had met Saskia, and, charmed by her youthful grace, had obtained permission to paint several versions of her dainty face, the somewhat irregular features of which were glorified by a brilliant complexion, a pair of penetrating eyes, and fair silky hair, curling round a broad, smooth forehead. The care Rembrandt bestowed on these portraits shows that he soon began to feel a special interest in the sitter. The attention he paid to Sylvius, whose portrait he etched in 1633, presenting him with four impressions (dated 1634), together with an autograph inscription, would furnish further proof, were any required, of his feeling for the young girl. He lived a quiet, secluded life, and showed little disposition for the habitual amusements of his brother artists. His goodness to his parents, the simplicity that proved him a man of domestic tastes, his love of his work, and his early success all augured well for his future. We may add that he was young, attractive, and good-looking, as we know from his portraits of 1633 and 1634 in the Louvre and the Berlin Gallery. He was accordingly well received by Saskia's family, which already reckoned several painters among its members, notably Wybrandt de Geest, the husband of Saskia's fifth sister, and the marriage, to which Rembrandt's mother had forwarded her consent from Leyden, took place on June 22, 1634. Numerous portraits of the young woman, painted, drawn, or etched by the master during their betrothal and after their marriage, attest

his delight at having so charming a model always at his disposal. That in the Cassel Gallery is certainly one of the most elaborate and carefully finished he ever painted, and as it bears neither date nor signature, it is probable that it was an offering to Saskia herself. She wears a large red velvet hat with a white feather, and appears in profile, the aspect in which Rembrandt evidently preferred her, for she almost is the only person he ever painted in this position. The delicacy of her skin, the shape of her eyes, that of her straight nose, slightly thickened at the end, and of her small and slightly compressed mouth, are clearly indicated, as in her other portraits. She wears a rich dress and jewels of great magnificence. It is evident that the master, while observing nature with the most scrupulous exactitude, was also anxious to show what refinements consummate mastery could give to silhouette and modelling, and what beauty could be bestowed on a labour of love by splendour of colour and delicacy of chiaroscuro. The sprig of rosemary in the young girl's hand—the Dutch emblem of betrothal—suggests the relations between the artist and his model.

Ardent and somewhat unsociable as we know Rembrandt to have been, we can imagine how eager he was to carry off his bride and instal her in his own home. Saskia, simple and loving, was governed in all things by his wishes. Entirely devoted to him, she never sought to direct him, and there was no sense of sacrifice in the alacrity with which she merged her identity in his. Rembrandt's tastes and pleasures should be hers. To him, idleness was impossible; and rejoicing that he could now combine the two passions of his heart, he set to work at once, taking advantage of the charming model who was henceforth never to leave him. In a picture in the Hermitage dated 1634, and known as 'The Jewish Bride,' he shows us Saskia as a shepherdess, standing at the entrance of a cave overgrown with creepers, and holding a flower-twined crook in her hand. Her luxuriant hair is crowned with a heavy wreath of spring blossoms, somewhat over-abundant perhaps, but carefully studied from nature. The rosy face, turned almost full to the spectator, and strongly illuminated, is full of artless satisfaction. Rembrandt seems to have been pleased with the travesty, for he repeated it in another portrait of the same period.

We recognise Saskia's features again in the 'Sophonisba receiving the Cup of Poison from Massinissa' of the Prado, dated 1634, and in a picture, painted probably in 1635, in the Royal collection at Buckingham Palace, where it is known as the

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'The Geographer.'s Pen and Wash
(Albertina)

'Burgomaster Pancras and his Wife.' As a fact, it represents Rembrandt standing beside Saskia, who, seated before a mirror, and dressed in a rich costume, fastens a pearl in her ear with a somewhat affected gesture, and gazes complacently at the effect. Her husband stands sedately by, holding out a pearl necklace, with which she is evidently to add the finishing touch to her toilette. He himself wears a fanciful costume of olive green, the tones of which make a fine harmony with the vivid red of the table-cover. The fond husband has apparently adorned his bride himself with the rich draperies and jewels he loved to collect for her. Having found this justification for expenditure, he multiplied the purchases on which he lavished his earnings. He cared less and less to quit his own home, and all his world now lay between the four walls of the dwelling that sheltered both his work and his affections. Here, free from all constraint, the young couple readily forgot all but each other, finding their pleasure, like children, in the veriest trifles. The master has immortalised one of their innocent orgies in the famous picture of the Dresden Gallery, painted about 1635. He is represented in a military costume, seated at a table on which is a raised pie surmounted by a peacock with outspread tail. In his right hand he brandishes a long glass of sparkling wine. His left hand is laid on Saskia's waist as she sits perched upon his knee. She wears a picturesque dress with slashed sleeves. Her small, dainty face and figure, thus brought into contrast with her husband's robust form and mighty head, give her the air of a little fairy in the grasp of a benevolent giant, trustful and happy in the love she has inspired. Her eyes are calm, and she looks more astonished than excited; the faintest smile plays round her lips. As for Rembrandt, his noisy gaiety is a little forced. It is evident that such junketings were unusual with this man, whose habits were so frugal and abstemious that, according to Houbraken, his meals generally consisted of "a piece of cheese or a herring with bread." It was the pictorial rather than the material elements of the feast that attracted him, and the very technique of the picture, with its sedate and accurate execution, seems to protest against the choice of subject. We think involuntarily of the devil-may-care spirit in which Frans Hals would have treated the scene, of the astounding bravura with which he would have thundered forth the chords of the harmony. Such outbursts were foreign to Rembrandt's temperament, although in his quest of novelty he saw in them an opportunity of treating a new phase of life, and thus of giving variety to his work. It was in

such change of occupation that he sought repose, and although in other respects he showed himself but too incapable of method in his manner of life, or of resistance to the impulses of his ardent nature, he at least never failed to turn all his vicissitudes to account for his art. The one point on which he showed himself uncompromising was in exacting respect for his labours, and at the height of his prosperity, as in the period of cruel misfortune which overwhelmed him, he remained the strenuous worker, knowing no satisfaction greater than that of complete absorption in his task.

The large number of his drawings that have come down to us attest both the eager curiosity of his intellect and his incessant activity. These drawings show the utmost variety of method; some are hasty jottings, others careful and elaborate essays in line. They were not made for others, but for himself, and are either experiments to serve for his instruction, or mediums for the expression of his thought. Side by side with the most unequivocal evidences of his mastery, he manifests an almost childish naïveté, and that fundamental sincerity of the man who is seeking, feeling his way, making good his mistakes, and endeavouring, above all, to give the utmost significance to his work. In these transparently sincere confessions, the man himself is revealed to us, his many-sided temperament, his ardent inspiration, his ingenuous experiments. He records the little details of his life and of his home; all models are welcome to him: his young wife, his relatives, the passers-by in the street, old women gossiping together, a woman leaning out of a window, another reading, another who has laid aside her book and fallen asleep, a crowd pressing round a fainting man, each person suggesting some special remedy—all these are touched with perfect truth and vivacity, seized in a moment, and rendered with a few strokes.

Rembrandt has been justly praised for the marvellous knowledge and exquisite taste he shows in the management of chiaroscuro, and he certainly deserves the title of 'luminariste' bestowed on him by Fromentin in recognition of his faculty for "painting by the help of light alone"—a faculty no one will be disposed to deny him. But it is hardly accurate to add that he 'draws' by the help of light alone. With palette in hand, he was right, of course, to make the utmost demands upon an art every secret of which he possessed. But his originality and knowledge as a draughtsman, though less widely recognised than his qualities as a painter, are no less consummate. At a very early period in his career he was able to express himself with pen or pencil by pure line, without shade. He studied movement

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Portrait of a Woman.' Red Chalk
(Louvre)

and attitudes both from himself and from models, the effects of various emotions upon faces and gestures. As time passed his skill became more and more perfect, his powers of observation keener and more subtle, till the reproduction on paper of the children of his fancy offered no sort of difficulty, and he could set them down in a few vital lines as freely and accurately as if they stood before him in the flesh. No sooner had he conceived them than he fixed their forms, not cold and inert, but full of the creative breath of his genius, and palpitating with expression. These were no happy accidents; he had won this gift of reality by incessant study, carried out with absolute sincerity. Other masters may have informed their drawings with more correctness, more taste, more charm, and more beauty; but none have made them express their thoughts more clearly and vigorously. Penetrated, intoxicated, so to speak, by his idea, he communicates it to us with such fervour that he associates us with his most intimate emotions, and we are no less astonished than delighted to find in sketches, apparently so hasty, and even clumsy, a power of expression so deep and so forcible.

Married to a young wife always eager to please him, Rembrandt often made her his model. From the point of view of conjugal propriety, it might, no doubt, be wished that the husband had shown more reticence. But in matters connected with his art, Rembrandt had no personal scruples. Thus, for the 'Danaë' of 1636 (in the Hermitage), he caused Saskia to pose for him, lying naked on a bed, confronting the spectator, and half turning towards the light, which bathes her youthful limbs. It is only fair to add that he kept the canvas in his own possession. Saskia figures again in the 'Susanna' of 1637 in The Hague Museum. The subject evidently pleased the master, for he returned to it more than once.

We recognise Saskia again in the chief figure of another Scriptural scene, painted the following year, the 'Samson's Marriage Feast' in the Dresden Gallery. Bedecked like a votive shrine, a diadem on her brow, the young woman sits enthroned at the table, a stolid spectator of the feast. Samson reclines at her side, but turns his back to her as if already indifferent, and propounds his riddles to a group of musicians in fantastic Turkish costumes. The guests, if we may judge by the licence of their attitudes, have hardly observed the sobriety proper to the East, and we are inclined to wonder what it was that attracted the master in the uninteresting episode. But if, disregarding the extravagances and puerilities of the composition, we examine its technical qualities, we are struck by the breadth of

treatment, by the skilful distribution of the light, which is concentrated on the principal group, dying away in a transparent penumbra full of delicate gradations. Finally, though the figures lack dignity, the harmonious splendours of the East are happily suggested in the rich costumes, and in the picturesque display of costly stuffs. Blues interwoven with silver, and reds mingled with gold, contrast happily with the predominant green tones of the picture.

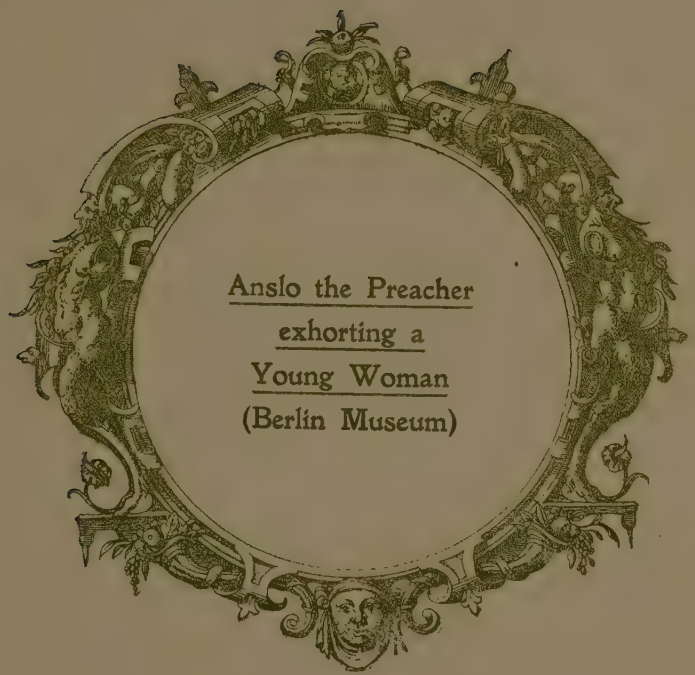
MANY other works engaged Rembrandt's attention at this period. He was fond, as we know, of variety in his studies, and we find him painting, drawing, and engraving in turn. In his first etchings, he was content with very simple methods, and even to the close of his career we shall find him at work now and then on some such limpid and severely treated composition, eloquent in its very reticence. But, at the same time, he never ceased to seek and to discover fresh resources in the technique with which he had familiarised himself. Learned and complicated as were the processes he employed, he never applied them in a narrow, specialist spirit. He showed great freedom in their use, forcing them to obey his will, and combining them to produce some particular result. His etchings are always those of a creative artist. It has been said again and again that it is impossible to discern the artifices to which he had recourse for combinations of the utmost subtlety and variety. His true secret was his genius, and far from parading his dexterity, he always insisted that his hand should be obedient to the mind that guided it. A sketch of a few hasty strokes sufficed him for the expression of his thought, and very often his conception was so definite from the outset that he required no preparatory studies for a work. Thus, instead of tracing his sketch on the plate, as is commonly done, he drew directly on the copper, and, as Bartsch very justly observes, "if this was not the best way of making a correct drawing, it served admirably to preserve all the fire of the first idea." This fire he always retained in his execution, which is so vivid and unexpected that we seem almost to watch the artist at work, and to follow the processes which resulted in works full of the warmth and animation of actual life.

Thanks to the mingled audacity and self-control that characterised

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

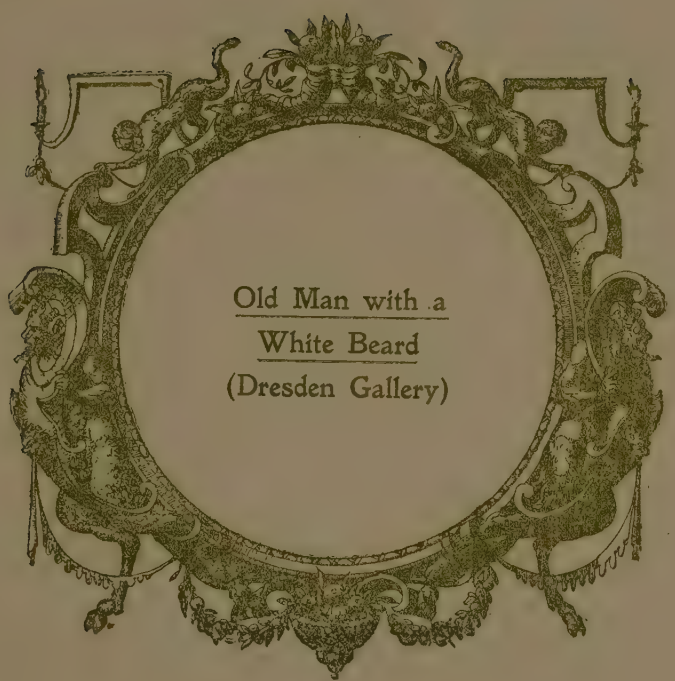
Study for 'The Good Samaritan'
Pen and Wash

Rembrandt and
Saskia
(Dresden Gallery)



Anslo the Preacher
exhorting a
Young Woman
(Berlin Museum)

The Presentation in the Temple
(The Hague Museum)



Old Man with a
White Beard
(Dresden Gallery)

him, some of his best plates show a variety of treatment truly marvellous. The touch is now sharp and abrupt, now mellow and caressing; forms sharply indicated by a few strokes of the needle in the high lights melt away into mysterious shadow; in some places the white of the paper is left almost untouched, and plays an important part in the effect; in others it disappears entirely under intense velvety blacks, strong yet transparent. Between the two extremes we note the play of exquisitely delicate modulations, produced either by contrasted values, or by mere differences of handling. The student is amazed at the expressive power achieved by such restricted means, at the sonorous harmonies the master draws from the instrument he had himself created—an instrument which, obedient to his slightest touch, enabled him at will to call up the most vivid of realities, or the most fantastic of visions.

At the period with which we are now concerned Rembrandt had completely mastered the difficult art of the etcher. His plates of this date reveal every aspect of his talent, ranging from the most summary sketches to the most finished compositions. He continued to take himself for his model, as he did to the end of his career, and also to draw on the copper persons of all ages and conditions among those surrounding him, notably members of the ragged regiment of his quarter, and those old men with strongly marked features, of whom the Jewish colony in Amsterdam furnished so many picturesque specimens for his Scriptural subjects. One of the most remarkable portraits etched by him at the time (1635) is that of the Remonstrant minister, Jan Uytenbogaerd. Rembrandt has represented him at the age of seventy-eight. His features show traces of weariness; but his benevolent face and candid eyes give a perfect impression of that stoical firmness which neither age nor suffering could quench. Turning to compositions inspired by the sacred writings, we may instance the 'Angel appearing to the Shepherds' of 1634, in which a very powerful effect has been won by the contrast of the darkness that shrouds the earth, and the radiance that shines in the parted sky. The 'Raising of Lazarus' (1633), in spite of its slightly theatrical character, impresses by a contrast of the same kind, and the figure of Lazarus, surrounded by spectators full of emotion at the miracle, and expressing in the most pathetic manner the pains and terrors of death, is a marvel of poetic invention.

The 'Abraham's Sacrifice' of 1635, in the Hermitage, with life-size figures, is one of the most important among the pictures of this period. The master's creative vigour is admirably manifested in

the striking figure of Abraham, covering with his left hand his young son's face, as if anxious at once to spare him the sight of the knife, and to avoid the mute entreaty of his eyes. A work of more modest dimensions, the little picture in the Louvre of the 'Angel Raphael leaving Tobias' (1637) is of a still higher artistic quality, and may be reckoned among Rembrandt's masterpieces. The moment chosen by the master is that in which the angel, his mission accomplished, reveals himself to the family at the threshold of their dwelling, and passes from their sight.

Rembrandt's prestige and reputation increased steadily. He was soon the most fashionable portraitist and the foremost historical painter of his day. Yielding to urgent solicitations, he had consented to open his studio to a certain number of pupils, the best known among whom are Ferdinand Bol, Govaert Flinck, Gerbrandt van den Eeckhout, Jan Victors, Philips Koninck, and, at a later period, Aert de Gelder. In order to lodge them conveniently, and also to house the curiosities and artistic objects he continued to amass, Rembrandt made up his mind, on January 5, 1639, to buy a fairly large house in the very centre of the Jewish quarter—in the Joden-Breestraat. The price was 13,000 florins, a very considerable sum for the period. He arranged it to suit his own requirements, and we learn from a passage in Houbraken, confirmed by one of Rembrandt's own drawings, that the master, jealous of his own independence, was solicitous for that of his pupils, which he did his best to secure by isolating each in a kind of cell "separated from the next by partitions of canvas, or even of paper, in such a manner that they could work freely from Nature, regardless one of another." Houbraken is also responsible for an accusation of avarice brought against Rembrandt, on no better authority than an apocryphal anecdote. It is a trait strangely out of keeping with the character of an artist who carried carelessness and indifference in money matters further, perhaps, than any of his fellows. Rembrandt, as we know, squandered his money in the most prodigal fashion. In his financial dealings with his own family he was always governed by his natural generosity, and by a kindness of heart "verging sometimes on extravagance," as Baldinucci tells us. His ready-money was spent and his credit often pledged in a reckless fashion, in the purchase of pictures, drawings, engravings, coins, and curiosities of all sorts, and in the matter of ornaments for his beloved Saskia nothing seemed to him too magnificent.

But if the artist could not resist the temptation of acquiring jewels to adorn his wife, and curiosities to enrich his collections, his life

Printed by Fr Schmidt, Paris.

'The Three Trees.' Etching (1643)

continued to be very methodical in all matters relating to his work. On this point his biographers are unanimous. Sandrart, Houbraken, and after them Baldinucci bear witness to the care with which he defended his hours of study. "When he was painting he would not have given audience to the greatest monarch on earth." We know that he cared little for society, and that he never appeared at any of the gatherings of his brother artists. Neither did he take much pleasure in intercourse with the devotees of classic culture who gave the tone to the society of the day, and we find a hint of his distaste for prevalent conventions in Sandrart's appreciation of him. After a passage in which he admits Rembrandt's genius and industry, the writer continues: "What he chiefly lacked was a knowledge of Italy, and of other places which give facilities for the study of the antique and the theory of art." What was to be expected of a painter who, setting at naught "established principles, the useful lessons of antique statues, Raphael's draughtsmanship and his admirable works, and the academic teaching so necessary in his profession," maintained that "Nature should be the artist's guide, and that to her rules only should he submit"? "It is certain," adds his critic, "that had he managed his affairs more prudently, and shown more respect for social rules, he might have been a wealthier man. But though he was no debauchee, he could not retain his position, and his art suffered from his predilection for the society of the vulgar."

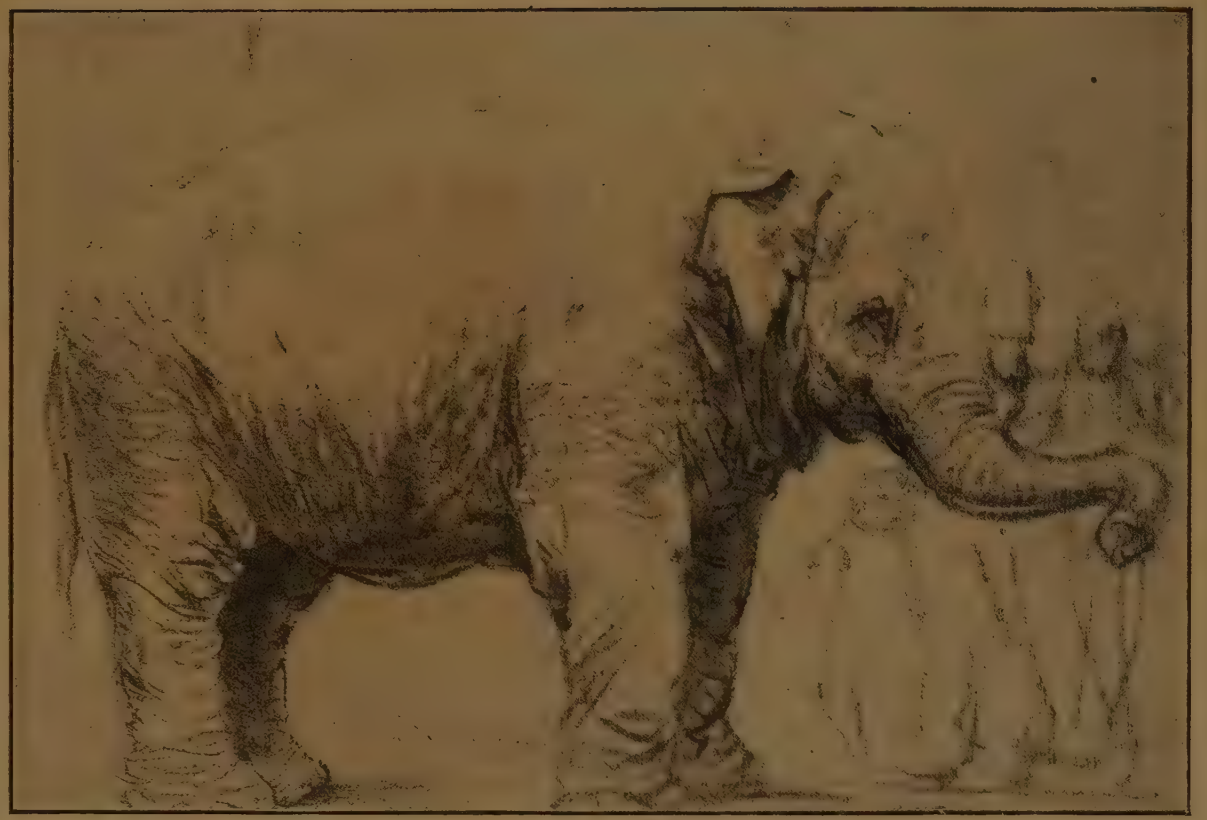
That intimacy with persons of the humbler middle class and of the lower orders which the German painter reprobated was of greater advantage to the master than the relations he might have cultivated with the great, had he been so minded. Among the poor and lowly he found opportunities of observing the lively and spontaneous manifestation of feelings he could never have studied in patrician society. His strength lay in his faculty for enduing his art with a truth and vitality that gave new life to apparently exhausted themes, and demonstrated their eternal freshness. On the other hand, it must be confessed that the mythological subjects he occasionally attempted were ill-suited to his genius. The artists of the Dutch School, in general, were unsuccessful in this 'genre,' and Rembrandt was no exception to the rule. His conception of 'The Rape of Ganymede' is a case in point. Nature was evidently consulted for the idea and the elements of the picture in the Dresden Gallery, which bears his name and the date 1635. The shape, the plumage, and the flight of the bird were studied from a real eagle, alive or stuffed, and a plump little Dutch boy of a plebeian type, who figures in several of his drawings

and etchings, was his model for the Olympian cup-bearer. The grotesqueness of the conception might make us think the picture the jest of some northern Lucian making merry at the expense of the gods. But Rembrandt, it would seem, was perfectly serious, and Vosmaer protests against the idea of a parody. In any case, the naïve impudence of the figure bears witness to the master's incapacity for such compositions, and gives a measure of the abyss that divides Dutch and Italian art.

There are persons who would deny the right of the critic to point out the master's aberrations in subjects of this class, and in others still more equivocal treated in certain of the etchings. They insist in this connection on the rights of genius, and the absolute liberty that must be accorded to its creations. Unqualified admiration, indiscriminate as unmeasured, is held to be the only legitimate attitude before giants such as Shakespeare and Rembrandt. It is true that vulgarity and indecency hold but a limited place in the master's work, and that the occasional licence we deplore was in harmony with the taste, the habits, and the tone of his age. But we need not, indeed, wonder that a nature like Rembrandt's, independent and inquiring, should sometimes have overstepped legitimate barriers, and have indulged in indecencies and even obscenities which the most elementary canons of taste and propriety condemn. Without any desire to insist upon these vagaries, or to give them a greater importance than they demand, we think it essential to touch upon them briefly in a serious study of the master. Astronomers have observed spots on the sun; but it remains the sun.

At this moment of supreme prosperity Rembrandt seems to have yielded himself without constraint to the seductions of a life full of happiness and interest. All seemed to smile on him. With his natural imprudence, he satisfied all his artistic fancies, and adorned the home he rarely quitted with curiosities and works of art. Saskia's health had not, as yet, given cause for anxiety. A sheet of sketches etched from her in 1636 show us five aspects of her charming face; its calm features and radiant expression are unchanged.

The young couple had, however, lost two children in rapid succession. One, a girl, baptized Cornelia on July 22, 1638, died a few days later; another, who received the same name on July 29, 1640, also died in infancy. The following year saw the birth of a boy, named Titus, after Saskia's sister Titia, the only one of their family who survived his childhood. The trials of repeated maternity exhausted the young wife, and in an etching executed about 1640, she is shown



Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

Study of an Elephant. Black Chalk
(British Museum)

in bed, huddled in the bed-clothes, with sharpened features, feverish eyes, and an expression of pensive melancholy. The season of uxorious festivity and innocent masquerade that marked the early days of wedded life is over, and the brief poem formed by the series of works Saskia had inspired, begun in joy, was soon to end in tears. Rembrandt's new anxieties were deepened by another sorrow, the loss of his mother, who was buried in St. Peter's Church at Leyden on September 14, 1640.

Rembrandt, as was his habit, sought relief from his troubles in work. His pictures of this period took on a grave and thoughtful character in harmony with his intimate musings. They were chiefly scenes from the Scriptures, in which he sought to express a happiness he prized more highly than ever now that his mother's death and Saskia's illness had made him realise that he might lose it. The smaller dimensions to which he returned in these pictures allowed of careful finish, and enabled him to give them a peculiarly penetrating charm of expression even in their slightest details. 'The Carpenter's Household,' in the Louvre, dated 1640, is an admirable specimen of these works. The composition is of the simplest: a young woman seated by a cradle suckles her infant, the old grandmother stoops to caress it, and the father plies his trade under a high window beside the group. The tools and utensils of the modest home are disposed about the room; a cat purrs by the hearth; sprays of vine cluster round the window, through which the sun pours gaily in. The minute finish, the delicate modelling, the radiant aspects both of life and Nature in this work seem to suggest that the painter had put forth all his powers to shed lustre on this poetic representation of the two things nearest to his own heart—family life and work. The 'Meeting of St. Elizabeth and the Virgin' (in the Duke of Westminster's collection) was also painted in 1640, and is marked by similar qualities.

The 'Manoah's Prayer,' in the Dresden Gallery, painted a year later, is a more important work, for which the master made two preliminary drawings. One of these is more carefully elaborated than the other, and gives the composition more or less completely. It is regrettable that in the figure of the Angel who wings his flight heavenward Rembrandt did not work out the indications of the second sketch, summary, it is true, but far more expressive, where the boldly touched outline is admirably conceived and full of animation. The angel of the Dresden picture is a grotesque invention—a clumsy, loutish boy encumbered by the folds of a long tunic, and so heavily

built that his wings seem absurdly inadequate to the task of supporting him. The figures of Manoah and his wife, on the other hand, are among the most beautiful and touching of artistic creations. Never did the master so eloquently express the intimate communion of two beings; the souls of the two seem to mingle in the fervour of common prayer. Their devotion makes an impression so deep upon the spectator that he scarcely notes the breadth and simplicity of the execution, the dignified cast of the draperies, and the magnificent quality of the skilfully contrasted reds, somewhat subdued in Manoah's robes, and swelling to sonorous splendour in those of his wife.

Some of the expressive charm of these compositions reappears in several portraits of this period, notably in Lord Yarborough's picture of a venerable old woman; in the 'Anna Wymer,' mother of the Burgomaster Six; and, above all, in the famous 'Lady with the Fan' at Buckingham Palace, a young woman of exquisite grace and distinction, whose air of subdued melancholy and quiet eyes suggest the beauty of a soul that has retained its candour and purity throughout many trials.

The 'Portrait of Renier Anslo' with a young woman, dated 1641, and acquired by the Berlin Museum in 1641, has long been accepted as representing the minister offering spiritual consolation to a widow. It is a fine example of those double portraits we have already had occasion to admire in 'The Shipbuilder and his Wife.' Here, again, Rembrandt gives a peculiar vitality to the composition, in which he sought to individualise his models by showing them to us in their actual surroundings, engaged in their usual avocations. The minister's air of conviction and authority, and the respectful attention with which his listener receives his exhortations, once more attest Rembrandt's clarity and directness in the rendering of his thought. The sober costumes of the sitters serve to emphasise their fresh carnations, and the general harmony very happily completes the somewhat austere effect of this fine picture.

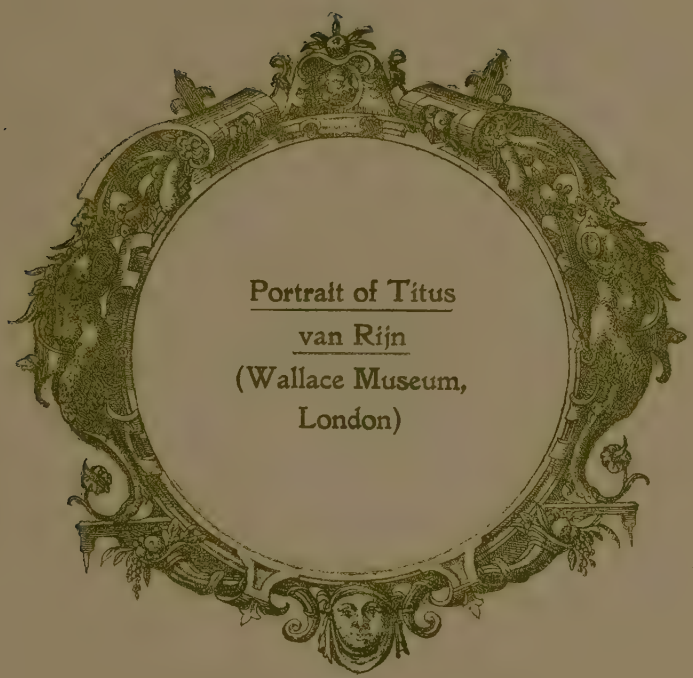
In addition to these numerous works, sufficient in themselves to have absorbed the activities of an artist less laborious and less prolific, a picture of great importance was now to occupy Rembrandt. The commission for 'The Night-Watch' had probably been given to him in the course of 1641. All the world knows what a patriotic part had been played by the civic corps of Holland in the war of independence. After the liberation of the land and the conclusion of peace, their mission might have been supposed to be at an end; nevertheless, they not only survived, but developed considerably.

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'The Raising of Lazarus.' Etching
(About 1633)

A Man in a Golden Helmet
(Berlin Gallery)

Samson's
Marriage Feast
(Dresden Gallery)



Portrait of Titus
van Rijn
(Wallace Museum,
London)

Portrait of
Hendrickje Stoffels
(Berlin Gallery)

Recruited among the notables of each town, they lent their assistance to the municipal authorities, who relied upon their vigilance for the maintenance of public safety. Each of these companies had its 'Doelen,' or assembly-hall, and the office of head of the association was much sought after. To perpetuate the memory of the honour bestowed on them, these chiefs usually presented their portraits to the corporation. Their subordinates, fired by that passion for military costumes which is common to the citizens of all nationalities, soon began to manœuvre for places beside their officers on these canvases, where they aspired to figure in the uniform of the corps, with their superiors—a favour which was accorded them in return for a contribution paid by each member according to his means. Thanks to this custom, such representations multiplied rapidly. They made each 'Doelen' a veritable museum, and finally constituted an essentially national 'genre' in Holland.

At first the artists to whom these commissions were entrusted, obliged to satisfy the aspirations of their clients, had been content to paint rows of portraits, ranged in double or single line, without any attempt to group the sitters, or to bring them into relation by concerted action. Gradually, however, attempts, crude enough at first, were made to unite them, not in any occupation characteristic of such citizen-warriors, but by means of a peaceful debate, or a drinking-bout. Such were the trivial motives which painters such as Frans Hals at Haarlem and Ravesteyn at The Hague had glorified by their talent. But Rembrandt was not the man to bow to accepted tradition. The proposed task appealed to his imagination, and he gave it free play. As was his wont, he enlarged the customary programme by drawing from his subject all the picturesque elements inherent therein. The composition he finally decided upon is familiar to us all, and after having furnished the theme for innumerable commentaries, the subject of 'The Night-Watch'—for the picture has preserved its misleading title—has been clearly determined, partly by study of the work itself, partly by the discovery of documents relating to it. It is, as was pointed out in Rembrandt's own lifetime, a march out of a company of the Civic Guard, at the moment when Banning Cocq, the captain, gives his lieutenant the order to advance.

Although the episode he had chosen was a complicated one, presenting serious difficulties, it would seem that the master, fascinated by his conception, attacked this formidable work, the largest of his compositions, over-hastily. No study of the whole

picture has been discovered so far. The only drawings extant are hasty sketches of the central group. Rembrandt was destined to pay dearly for this neglect during the course of his work. The absence of preliminary studies accounts for the inequalities and inconsequences, the over-painting and corrections that disfigure the work. We must admit that the weapons of the troop are very heterogeneous, and the costumes curiously motley, while the extraordinary confusion that seems to obtain among them argues ill for their discipline. Finally, in spite of all the explanations that have been put forward, several of the figures remain enigmatical. What, for instance, is the meaning of the two little girls in the middle of the picture? Rembrandt, we may fairly suppose, allowed his fancy free play here as elsewhere; he chose the most picturesque elements of the actual scene, and combined them with details suggested by his imagination.

It must be remembered that time and the mutilations or alterations the picture seems to have undergone have no doubt aggravated its defects; and some of the criticisms directed against it proved to be quite unjustified, after the intelligent cleaning to which it was subjected in 1889. But in spite of the brilliance that has been restored to it, making it evident that Rembrandt's intention was to represent a day and not a night scene, it is surely somewhat of an exaggeration to speak of "the sunny effect of the picture in its original state," for contemporary testimony is directly opposed to this hypothesis. It is certain that, even when it first left the master's studio, the picture was very low in tone. Voudel covertly alludes to Rembrandt as "the Prince of Darkness," and deprecates "the artificial shadows, the phantoms and twilight" he introduced into the Dutch School. In 1618, Hoogstraten, after eulogising his master's work, records his regret that "he did not put more light in it." A little later, we find Houbraken declaring that, after Rembrandt's transient popularity, "true connoisseurs turned from him when their eyes were opened, and when light painting came into favour again." The master's preference for deep and glowing colour was becoming more and more pronounced at this period. The first portraits he painted at Amsterdam were characterised, it is true, by high and silvery tones, and neutral, slightly greenish shadows. But gradually, as his preoccupation with chiaroscuro increased, his shadows, though they remained transparent, became warmer and more golden. Absorbed in the dual problems of colour-harmonies and luminous effects, he attempted to reconcile the two. But he

Sketch by Rembrandt of Leonardo's 'Last Supper.' Red Chalk. (Collection of Prince George of Saxony)

tended more and more to adopt a deep tonality, in which reds, russets, and tawny tints predominated, and in this powerful but comparatively restricted scale he found gradations of marvellous vigour and delicacy.

On the whole, 'The Night-Watch,' if it is not, as it has too often been called, Rembrandt's masterpiece, is certainly one of his most interesting works, one before which the student is most disposed to linger, fascinated by that strange commingling of fact and poetry so stimulating alike to admiration and criticism. It has a life and a light all its own, and when, after contemplating it for a time, we turn to the canvases around it, they seem poor, meagre, inanimate, and, as Samuel Van Hoogstraten remarked, "no better than the figures on a pack of cards."

'The Night-Watch,' then, holds a place apart in the history of corporation pictures, alike by its originality of treatment and beauty of execution. Whereas Rembrandt's predecessors had accepted a convention perfectly insignificant from the pictorial standpoint, he had at once grasped the true conditions of the 'genre,' and not only surpassed, but effaced, all his forerunners. His 'Anatomy Lesson' of ten years earlier suggested the glorification of Science; 'The Night-Watch' turns our thoughts to that civic heroism which had lately compassed the independence of Holland.

THE NIGHT-WATCH was finished in 1642, and it may be that Rembrandt's growing anxiety as to Saskia's health had had some influence on the execution of this great work. Less than a year after the birth of Titus the young mother's illness had made rapid progress; she faded day by day, and illusions as to her recovery were soon no longer possible. Conscious of her increasing weakness, she begged that a notary might be brought to her bedside, and at nine o'clock in the morning of June 5, 1642, "in the full possession of all her faculties," she gave him her last instructions in the presence of two witnesses. Yet she herself had not lost all hope of reprieve, for in the will she dictated she spoke of the children she might eventually have. She made Rembrandt her sole legatee; he was to enjoy a life-interest in their common property, save in the event of his re-marriage, the only condition laid down being that he should bring up their son Titus in a suitable manner, and, on his majority, establish him in life,

or give him a sufficient portion. Saskia further stipulated that no legal measures should be taken to enforce these provisions, seeing that she had perfect confidence in her husband, and knew he would carry out her wishes conscientiously. Accordingly, no inventory of their property was to be made, nor was the Chamber of Orphans to demand a statement of accounts. At the end of this document she signed her name for the last time, in tremulous, almost illegible, characters, as if exhausted by the effort.

A few days later Saskia passed away, and on June 19, 1642, Rembrandt followed her coffin to the Oude Kerk, and returned to the house in the Breestraat, where everything reminded him of his brief happiness, and where he was now alone with a child nine months old. In accordance with the directions in Saskia's will, the Chamber of Orphans, with the full concurrence of Saskia's cousin, Hendrick van Uylenborch, authorised Rembrandt to take possession of her property, without furnishing a statement or inventory of any kind. This negligence on the part of Titus' natural protectors combined with the master's carelessness to bring about serious difficulties in the future. The omission confirmed Rembrandt in his careless attitude, and, by enabling him to draw without reserve on the common exchequer, gradually lured him on to his ruin.

The loss of a wife he had fondly loved was not Rembrandt's only trouble at this period. He felt that his popularity was on the wane, and he, who had been the most fashionable of Dutch painters, was beginning to learn the meaning of neglect. His eccentric manners, and his unceremonious treatment of would-be sitters, even of the highest position, had estranged the society that had received him so warmly at first. 'The Night-Watch' was destined to deal a heavy blow to his reputation, and to diminish his 'clientèle' very sensibly. It is easy to understand the disastrous effect produced by this work. The two officers, prominent in the centre of the canvas, had, of course, no cause for complaint. But the rank and file, with the exception of some four or five members, had a distinct grievance against the master. Faces in deep shadow, relieved only by fitful gleams of light, others scarcely visible, and so freely treated as to be barely recognisable, were not at all what they had bargained for. Indifferent to their wishes, Rembrandt's sole concern had been with the æsthetic quality of his composition; his dominant idea had been to produce a picture. His sitters resented this cavalier treatment, and there was a gradual falling off in his commissions. No doubt the artist had still devoted friends, who saw and sympathised with

Printed by E. Schmidt, Paris

'Cottage surrounded by Trees'
Pen and Wash
(Heseltine Collection)

his grief. But adversity, far from softening his asperities, gave a misanthropic tinge to a character naturally somewhat morose. Happily, he had his work to console him, and he now turned to the study of landscape, to which he had hitherto given little attention. It may be that the poor recluse felt that yearning for rest and refreshment which draws so many stricken souls to the fields, or that Titus, who, to judge from his portraits, was never very robust, required country air. Whatever the cause, landscape studies become frequent among his works from this time forward. He had always loved natural scenery, as the numerous pictures by landscape painters in his inventory attest. But, as we know, the course of his early development was largely determined by the teachings of Swanenburch and Lastman. Thus his allegiance was long divided between the two conflicting tendencies which obtained in Dutch art at the beginning of his career. It is perhaps in his landscapes that this struggle, of which he was himself unconscious, is most evident. He strove in all sincerity to reconcile the opposing forces which warred for mastery in the national school, hesitating for awhile to range himself on either side. From the first he recognised and appreciated the resources offered him by Nature for the picturesque expression of thought, and gradually assigned it a more and more important part in his compositions. But absorbed by incessant labour, and overwhelmed with commissions on his arrival at Amsterdam, he had little leisure to consult Nature in the neighbouring fields. Hence convention often did duty for direct observation, and his reliance on a formula is very apparent.

In what strange country, we may be permitted to wonder, did Rembrandt find the motive of his 'Storm,' in the Brunswick Gallery, painted about 1640? The scene is evidently taken from a land of dreams, and the artist, giving free course to his fiery imagination, has made his subject a pretext for those oppositions of light and shadow he loved to render. In such visions as this the anchorite seems to have sought indemnity for his sedentary habits. His travels were made before his easel, where he realised the fantastic regions of his dreams, substituting western rocks and mountains for the wide Dutch plains that stretched before his eyes, and glowing amber and russet for the vivid greens of Dutch trees and pastures. Other landscapes of the same period (those, for example, in the Wallace Museum, and in the galleries of Oldenburg, Budapesth and Cracow) show the same contrasts, the same magical chiaroscuro, and the same chaotic massing together of incoherent details. This combination of fantasy and

fact proclaims the hesitation of the artist, powerless to disengage himself alike from the visions that haunted him and the realities he loved.

However, it may be that he now began to recognise the inadequacy of his Nature studies, or had at last leisure to pursue them more steadily ; it is clear that he soon came under the spell they could not fail to exercise over him. In striking contrast with the complicated landscapes he had hitherto painted, his drawings and etchings of this period deal with the simplest themes, and record impressions of the most absolute sincerity. In the presence of Nature, no theme was too humble for him. Unexpected beauties revealed themselves to him, and he set himself to express them with the frankness of a child. The construction of these sketches made in the country is as irreproachable as the design of his painted landscapes was audacious and incorrect. The trees, at first, betray an inexperienced hand ; their outlines against the sky are rendered by a series of formless scribbles. But gradually their foliage is indicated with more care and precision, and the master soon perceived the value of such picturesque details in his compositions. Etchings made from these sketches, or drawn from Nature on the copper, become more and more numerous, showing both his delight in the work and the rapid progress resulting therefrom.

It was in the etching known as ' The Three Trees ' (1643) that Rembrandt first revealed himself a master of landscape. In this impressive plate every detail suggests the conflict of the elements. The tempestuous execution is in fine harmony with this fierce aspect of Nature, and suggests the haste and ardour with which the master covered the copper, using the first plate that came to hand in his eagerness to record the effect which appealed so strongly to his imagination.

From this time forth his slightest sketches bear the imprimatur of his genius. In a few rapid strokes he conjures up some idea of the inexhaustible diversity of Nature, preserving the characteristic features of every image he presents to us. Three etchings of the year 1645, ' Six' Bridge,' the ' View of Omval,' and ' The Grotto,' very dissimilar in motive, are marked by the same sincerity and truth of expression.

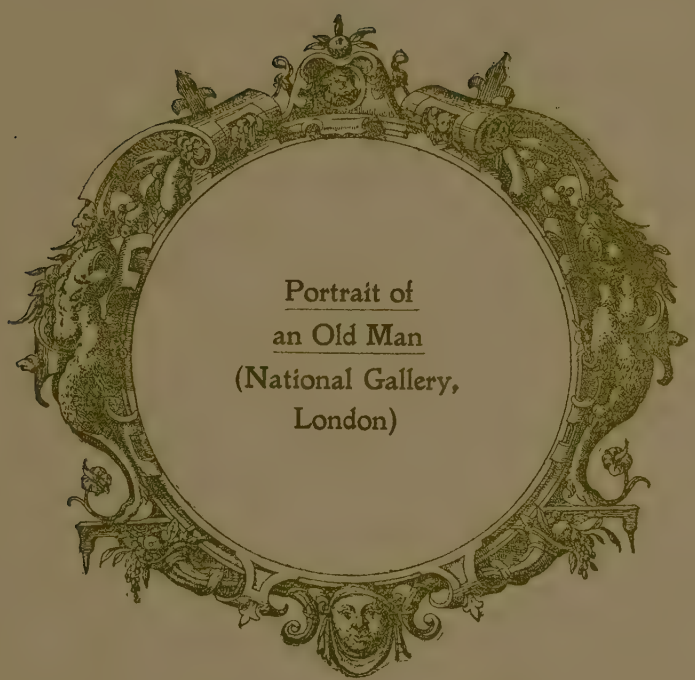
Rembrandt, as we see, had mastered the art of landscape. A little ' Winter Scene,' in the Cassel Gallery, dated 1646, is a slight yet vivid record of a simple motive that has all the spontaneity of a rapid sketch from Nature. If in ' The Ruin ' of the same gallery, painted about 1650, he seems to return to the complex and slightly

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Renier Anslo.' Study for the etched Portrait (1640). Red and Black Chalk. (British Museum)

Portrait of the Artist
(Vienna Gallery)

Family Group
(Brunswick Gallery)



Portrait of
an Old Man
(National Gallery,
London)

Samson and Delilah
(Royal Palace,
Berlin)

artificial construction of his landscape compositions, he rises to the sublimest poetry in Lord Lansdowne's 'Windmill,' painted a few years later, unquestionably his masterpiece in this 'genre.' The windmill, rising above a watercourse, stands out in strong relief against a stormy sky illuminated only in the lower part. The sun has sunk below the horizon, but its last rays gild the broad wings of the mill; below, the water, the banks, and the distant landscape melt into the gathering shadows. A solemn calm broods over the earth. The details, less numerous than usual, and very judiciously selected, far from distracting the attention, enhance the melancholy poetry of the scene.

Rembrandt's large curiosity, and his love of Nature, led him to avail himself of every possible opportunity for study. Like most of his compatriots, he loved animals, and a long list might be made of all the various creatures—cats, dogs, horses, pigs, and birds—which figure in his compositions. If at the beginning of his career he had been obliged to rely on engravings for the exotic beasts that figure in his Biblical compositions, he had neglected no opportunity of observing them for himself since his arrival at Amsterdam, either when merchant-ships brought specimens from distant lands, or when some travelling menagerie visited the city. The interest he took in such studies is shown by the numerous drawings he made of lions, camels, monkeys, and bears, some of which are marvels of truth and expression. One of the most remarkable of these studies is that of an elephant in the British Museum, in which a few strokes suffice to give an amazingly vivid suggestion of the beast's vast bulk.

Sometimes, by way of relaxation and to vary the tints of his palette, he experimented on such subjects as the admirable 'Carcase of an Ox' in the Louvre (1655), or the 'Dead Peacocks' of Mr. W. Cartwright's collection at Aynhoe. In 1635, as we have seen, he made use of the study of an eagle for his 'Ganymede,' and in 1639 he painted the 'Sportsman with a Bittern' of the Dresden Gallery, a picture the chiaroscuro of which is no less fascinating than the exquisite distinction of its very original harmony. These studies were not merely a diversion from more arduous works, but methods of research by which he refreshed his talent. Everything interested him in Nature, and in the life about him; but the human form always remained the chief object of his attention. The models who sat for him were of all ages, all conditions, and even of all races, as witness the 'Two Negroes' belonging to Dr. A. Bredius. Portraits of old ladies continued to figure on his easel; and that of Elizabeth Bas, painted

about 1644 (Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam), is certainly one of his finest achievements. The vigorous contours, the close, decisive drawing, the firm and delicate modelling, the rich colour, all combine to suggest the individuality of the sitter. These technical qualities symbolise her simplicity and uprightness, the indefinable air of trenchant determination that marks her individuality.

Contrary to his habit, Rembrandt rarely posed as his own model at this period. If we compare the National Gallery portrait of 1640, those of the Carlsruhe Gallery and of Buckingham Palace, both painted about 1645, and the etching of 1648, 'Rembrandt Drawing,' we are struck by the alteration in his face. The lines are deeper, and the furrow his persistently concentrated gaze has set between the brows is more strongly marked. The features are blunter, and the fires of youthful pride and passion are quenched in the eyes; they have a sad and anxious expression. He seems to have sought solace in the treatment of religious themes. The episodes he chose are in the main serious and touching, attuned to the gravity of his own thoughts. Two pictures in the Louvre, dated 1648, 'The Good Samaritan' and 'The Supper at Emmaus,' are especially remarkable in this connection. No other motives seem to have appealed so strongly to Rembrandt as these two; of none did he produce such a variety of versions at different stages of his career. The sentiment of 'The Good Samaritan' was of a kind that appealed strongly to his kindly and compassionate heart. Some prescience of his own fate seems to have haunted him, lending a peculiar attraction to the episode. He, too, was destined to lie stripped and bleeding by Life's wayside, while men passed by unheeding. The example in the Louvre sums up, and surpasses, all the earlier essays which had served the master as preludes. All the world is familiar with this pathetic composition, so eloquently described and ably appreciated by Fromentin.

But emotion is perhaps even more powerfully expressed in 'The Supper at Emmaus,' where the sentiment is of a more intimate order, and certainly more difficult to render. Here we have greater simplicity, and a more personal method of treatment. Recalling earlier versions of the touching Gospel story, the purely decorative compositions of artists such as Bellini, Titian, and Veronese, we feel that it was reserved for Rembrandt to understand and translate its tender poetry. Henceforth, we can hardly conceive of the scene but as he painted it. What depths of faith and adoration he has suggested in the attitude of the disciple who, "his heart burning within him" at his Master's words, recognises Him in the breaking

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'The Three Crosses.' Etching (1653)

of bread, while his companion, unconvinced as yet, leans upon the arm of his chair, his questioning gaze on the Saviour's face. But more admirable than all is the conception of the risen Christ, the mysterious radiance of the wan face, the parted lips, the glassy eyes that have looked on death, the air of beneficent authority that marks His bearing. By what magic of art was Rembrandt able to render things unspeakable, to breathe into our souls the sublime essence of the sacred page through the medium of a picture "insignificant at a first glance, with no beauty of accessories or background, subdued in colour, careful, and almost awkward in handling"?[1]

Rembrandt had attempted the subject several times before giving it this supreme expression; in several etchings, in two pictures (one in the Copenhagen Gallery, the other in Madame Edouard André's collection), and in the strange drawing at Dresden, the motive of which could only have been conceived by Rembrandt. The Saviour has vanished, and the place just occupied by Him is filled with vivid light. The two disciples gaze at it terror-stricken, one cowering against the wall.

It is interesting to note how, at different stages of his career, Rembrandt returned to certain subjects that attracted him. He never wearied of improving the composition of these themes, and the care he bestowed on this important element of his art, his continual efforts to develop his aptitudes in this respect, show what capital importance he attached to it.

At this moment of his life, and in the frame of mind in which he found himself, it was natural that the personality of Christ should have had a peculiar fascination for him. He illustrated the compassionate aspects of the Saviour's character more especially in a series of deeply moving works. First in order is the important etching of 1649, 'Christ Healing the Sick,' better known as 'The Hundred Guilder Print,' in which the Saviour stands between the two groups formed by the Scribes and Pharisees on the one hand, and the poor and infirm who have come for healing on the other. In the 'Christ Preaching' (c. 1652), the motley throng gathered round Jesus, and hanging on His words, serves to bring the preacher's air of irresistible authority into strong relief. The type here adopted by Rembrandt —one of singular nobility, with brown hair and beard, melancholy, intelligent eyes, and features marked by a mingled sweetness and severity—reappears in the beautiful 'Head of Christ' of the Rodolphe Kann collection, and also in the 'Christ Appearing to the Magdalen'

[1] Fromentin, 'Les Maîtres d'Autrefois,' p. 380.

of 1651 (in the Brunswick Gallery), an episode Rembrandt treated more than once.

ABSORBED in his art, and ignorant of all the material details of life, Rembrandt, left alone with a little child to bring up, found it impossible to manage his household himself. Geertge Dircks, Titus' nurse, a woman of a vulgar, resolute type, soon gained an ascendency over him, which her master's weakness of character encouraged her to abuse. In the disputes and lawsuits to which her growing pretensions finally led, Rembrandt had been supported by the evidence of a young girl, Hendrickje Stoffels, also a member of his household, whose devotion to the father and the child had gradually given her an important place in the poor household. But the master's ardent nature, his yearning for affection, and his scorn of conventional restraints soon brought about a change in the domestic situation. Hendrickje became his mistress, a state of things which caused no little scandal in his circle. In 1654, after twice disregarding a summons to appear before the consistory of her church, the young woman was severely reprimanded by the elders, and forbidden to partake of the Sacrament. Had she been disposed to deny her fault, concealment would no longer have been possible, for shortly afterwards she gave birth to a daughter, whom Rembrandt acknowledged, and who was baptized in the Oude Kerk by the name of Cornelia, after his mother.

The beautiful portrait in the Louvre, painted in 1652, is our first introduction to Hendrickje, whose somewhat ordinary features are glorified by the sweetness and animation of her expression, which Rembrandt has rendered with a penetrating charm. Two pictures, or rather two nude studies, dated 1654, the 'Woman Bathing' (National Gallery, London), and the 'Bathsheba' in the Louvre, marvels of brilliance and freshness, show that Hendrickje had yielded to the master's request that she should pose as his model. Irregular as was their connection, the young woman showed an unflagging affection and devotion to Rembrandt's interests, which lasted to the end of her life, and fully justified the tenderness she inspired both in Rembrandt and Titus. To judge by the numerous pictures and drawings his father made of him, the boy's health was always feeble. In the two delicious portraits of 1655, one in Lord Crawford's

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Dr. Faustus.' Etching. (About 1651)

collection, which shows him seated at a desk and dreaming over his unwritten task, the other in the Rodolphe Kann collection, where he appears dressed in the rich costume of a young prince, his delicate features recall the somewhat fragile grace of his young mother.

Happy once more in his home, Rembrandt became less and less inclined to leave it. It is probable that the models from whom he painted most frequently at this period were, like Hendrickje, members of his household, of whom he made studies, as was his habit. One was an old woman of venerable appearance, in whose wrinkled features we trace the remains of former beauty. A touching serenity tempers the weariness of her tired eyes and sorrowful expression. There are five studies of this model dated 1654; three are in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. Another sitter was a very young girl, whom recent criticism has attempted to identify with Hendrickje, a hypothesis that seems to me inadmissible. 'The Young Servant' at Stockholm and the 'Girl with the Broom' at the Hermitage are, in fact, little more than children, while the Hendrickje of the Louvre portrait and of the 'Bathsheba' show a young woman in the full bloom of maturity.

In addition to these vivid and sincere studies by which Rembrandt continued to refresh his powers, we must also note several compositions inspired by Scripture at this period. In certain of these, as, for instance, the 'Joseph accused by the Wife of Potiphar' (c. 1655), the richness and harmony of the colour-scheme, in which reds and greens are magnificently contrasted, are even more remarkable than the expressive faces and attitudes of the three figures. In the 'Jacob blessing the Children of Joseph,' of 1656 (in the Cassel Gallery), on the other hand, the tonality is soft and subdued, and the master achieves an eloquence at once simple and pathetic by depth and intensity of sentiment. He had now come to the full maturity of his powers, as is well shown in the masterly execution of his portraits, notably that of 'An Architect' (Cassel Gallery), absorbed in meditation, and that of 'Dr. Tholinx' (Madame E. André's collection), a sturdy figure with keen, inquiring eyes, a vigorous work of extraordinary breadth and freedom. Rembrandt was already familiar with his model. The fine etching in which the doctor is shown at a table, pausing in his reading to think out some grave medical problem, was probably executed a year earlier. Impeccable firmness of drawing becomes more and more marked in the successive etched portraits of this period, such as those of the landscape painter, Jan Asselyn (1648), the famous printseller, Clement de Jonghe (1651), Antonides

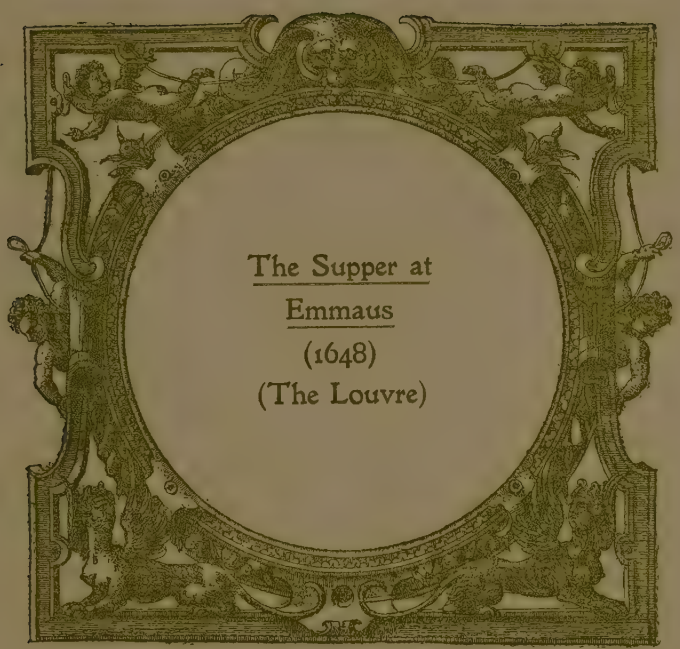
van der Linden (c. 1652), and, above all, Jan Lutma (1656), the famous goldsmith.

As years passed by, the embarrassments caused by Rembrandt's perpetual purchases were complicated by engagements into which he had entered, the settlement of which he sought to retard by expedients still more ruinous. The purchase of his house had proved especially onerous, for having failed to pay the capital and interest at the intervals agreed upon in the contract, he had been driven to borrow sums of money at usurious interest, and these again he was unable to pay off. At last Saskia's relatives were roused to action, and made a tardy effort to safeguard the interests of Titus, and secure his share of his mother's property. Rembrandt was henceforth at the mercy of lawyers and men of business. Pitilessly exploited by both, he continued to fill his house with artistic treasures, which he bought regardless of cost, and without deigning to drive a bargain, after a fashion truly inexplicable. His house was a perfect museum of rare and costly objects. The choice of the pictures bore witness to the eclectic taste of the owner; the works of the Italian masters and of the German primitives hung side by side with those of his own countrymen, mainly the landscape painters. But the engravings were the real treasures of this collection, one of the most extensive and remarkable ever made. All the great engravers were represented by fine examples, and we can understand the interest with which Rembrandt studied and copied their works.

Perpetually put off and sent away empty by a debtor whose one desire was to be freed from their importunities, and who was often unconscious of the dubious means he employed to this end, his creditors became more and more pressing. Finally Rembrandt was declared bankrupt at their petition, and on July 25 and 26, the commissaries of the Insolvency Court caused an inventory to be made of all the "pictures, furniture and household effects" of his home. Towards the close of the following year, on December 27, 1657, a sale of some of these was begun; but the moment was unfavourable, and all the precious objects, "collected with great discrimination by Rembrandt van Rijn," as the sale notice put it, fetched the absurd price of barely 5000 florins. The sale of the house in the Breestraat, several times deferred, took place some time afterwards, and at the age of fifty-two the master, homeless and penniless, witnessed the dispersal of all his artistic treasures.

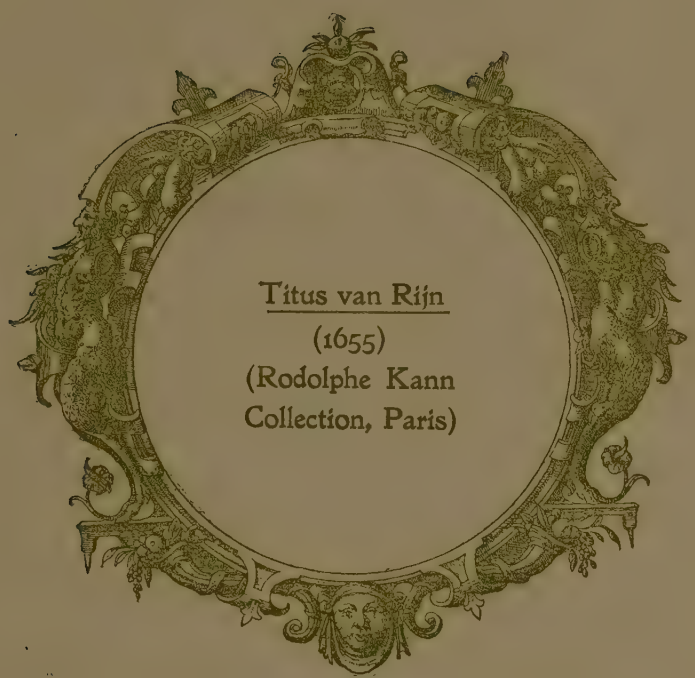
Printed by F. Schmidt Paris.

'Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.' Pen and Sepia
(Mr. J. P. Heseltine's Collection)



The Supper at
Emmaus
(1648)
(The Louvre)

The Blinding of Samson (1628) (Städel Institute, Frankfort)



Titus van Rijn
(1655)
(Rodolphe Kann
Collection, Paris)

REMBRANDT seems to have been utterly crushed by the catastrophe. His troubles with his creditors were, however, by no means at an end, and until his death he had to cope with insoluble difficulties. The guardianship of his son had been taken from him, and it was with the greatest difficulty that Titus' relatives managed to obtain from the liquidators of the bankruptcy a sum of 6952 florins, representing his maternal heritage. Even this was very tardily paid. The poor trio had to live on the expectation of this money, and meanwhile to make what they could out of a few remnants saved from the wreck. But Rembrandt had outlived his popularity. Amateurs showed a growing preference for smooth, fused, high-toned painting, minutely finished, and he was not the man to bow to the caprices of the public and conform to its taste.

It must have cost him an effort to shake off his torpor, and bestir himself once more, for the year 1657 was almost barren of large works; the master produced only a few etchings and painted studies. But soon he took courage, and in the bare austerity of the makeshift studio where he set up his easel, he began to work again valiantly. As always, he made use of the models he had ready to his hand: Hendrickje, Titus, and himself. His own portrait in the Louvre, painted in 1660, shows the ravages that successive trials had wrought in his appearance. He had become an old man. But we see him at work again, dressed in a tunic of coarse material, his head swathed in a white bandage. He is unshaven, and his scanty hair has turned white; but his palette is in his hand, and in his concentrated gaze we note the energy and tenacity of the indomitable worker.

Rembrandt's execution, very expressive and even violent, has now an extraordinary energy; it gives the humblest subjects he treats a sort of mysterious grandeur which transforms and ennobles them. In the magnificent study, painted in 1658, the 'Old Woman cutting her Nails,' of the Rodolphe Kann collection, we forget the vulgarity of the features and the homeliness of the occupation; for, in spite of her decrepitude, this old woman has the august bearing of a Fate or an antique Sibyl. There is the same breadth, the same decision in the 'Portrait of the Burgomaster Six,' painted shortly afterwards, and dashed off rapidly, perhaps in a few hours of inspiration. Each stroke has told, and, thanks to the firmness of the touch, the frankly applied colour has retained such brilliance that after two and a half

centuries this fine and carefully preserved work, which is still in the possession of the Six family, looks as if it had been painted yesterday.

Gradually, as we see, the master had regained his self-possession. Titus, whose development we are able to follow year by year in his father's sketches, had become a young man of refined and attractive appearance. In concert with Hendrickje, to whom he always showed the most affectionate gratitude, he had taken certain measures on behalf of Rembrandt, designed to safeguard him against the imprudences or extravagances he would certainly have committed if he had been left to his own devices. As he remained an undischarged bankrupt, and could, as such, possess no property of any sort, the pair had formed a partnership as dealers in curiosities and works of art. In consideration of the help given to them in their undertaking by Rembrandt, they agreed to lodge, board, and keep him, and to give him a small remuneration, which he was to repay by degrees when he began to earn something again by his work.

The profits of the partnership, formed primarily for the sale of the master's own works, supported the little family. As the ward of Titus and Hendrickje, absolved from all material preoccupations, Rembrandt was once more free to devote himself entirely to his art. The year 1661 is accordingly one of the most prolific of his career. The 'St. Matthew with the Angel' (in the Louvre), which bears this date, is a composition of the highest order. The Apostle's type lacks nobility, it is true. His features are coarse, his dress poor. The handling is harsh and abrupt, almost brutal, but on the other hand, the picture has all the subtlety of expression peculiar to the master. It would be difficult indeed to render more clearly and eloquently an idea which seems to lie beyond the expressive power of painting: divine inspiration penetrating a human soul. Seated at a table, absorbed in the composition of his Gospel, the old man becomes conscious of the presence who visits him in his retreat. The angel has approached him, and laying his hand on his shoulder, breathes the sacred words into his ear. The Apostle presses his withered hand to his breast, as if to retain the sublime confidences he has just received. Gazing abstractedly into space, he prepares to write at the angel's dictation. 'The Praying Pilgrim,' in the Weber collection at Hamburg, is also dated 1661, and is a work of the same order, marked by the same force of expression, and the same touching and magnetic emotion. The pilgrim is seen in profile; he prays fervently, with folded hands, and we are thrilled by the beauty of the

Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Life Study of a Young Man'
Pen and Wash
(Mr. J. P. Heseltine's Collection)

ascetic head, the fire of the eyes, and the ardour of a personality absorbed in silent ecstasy.

We should feel some difficulty in accepting the 'Venus and Cupid' in the Louvre as a work contemporary with these austere conceptions and with a considerable number of portraits, if we had not already noted the master's incapacity for the treatment of mythological subjects. With Dr. Bode, we believe that the figures to whom this very inappropriate label has been attached were Hendrickje and her child, the little Cornelia. Their apparent ages, and the type of the so-called 'Venus,' justify the assumption. Hendrickje, if Hendrickje it be, has grown stout; her contours have lost their youthful grace, and the peevish Cupid beside her has no more distinction than his mother. But if we disregard the myth, with which the persons evidently have no connection, and accept the picture as a rendering of maternal love, we cannot but admire the expression of intimate tenderness that unites these two beings, whose pronounced Dutch types have so little affinity with classic fable.

The Stockholm Gallery unhappily owns but a fragment of the large mutilated canvas, which, after having borne such various titles as 'The Conspiracy of John Ziska,' 'Judas Maccabæus and his Brothers,' 'Odin founding the Kingdom of Sweden,' etc., has but recently regained its true name: 'Claudius Civilis exhorting the Batavians to throw off the Roman Yoke.' The discovery made by the learned archivist, Mr. de Roever, in 1892, of the order for the picture, which was to decorate the Town Hall of Amsterdam, has finally solved the problem. A hasty pen-and-ink sketch by Rembrandt in the Munich Print Room shows the original composition in its entirety. The scene as Rembrandt conceived it, though not very clearly characterised, is fairly faithful to the text of Tacitus. The midnight banquet at which the principal Batavian chiefs gave in their adhesion to Civilis, and swore to throw off the yoke of their oppressors, takes place in a large vaulted room. There is reason to believe that the vast canvas, which Rembrandt treated with much decorative freedom, in view of its destined place in the Town Hall, failed to please the magistrates who had given the commission, and that they refused to accept it. It then became a question how to dispose of the unwieldy picture, and it seems evident that it was pared down to the central group, which, after various vicissitudes, has found asylum at Stockholm. However this may be, the broad execution of the surviving fragment harmonises perfectly with the obscure character of the episode, and the powerful effect, obtained by

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the simplest means, attests the painter's mastery by the varied play of the colours, and the delicate harmonies they produce. The portion to the right in particular is a miracle of brilliance. The man with long white hair in a cymar of pale gold tissue, and the four strongly illuminated figures nearest him, make up a chromatic passage of exquisite grace and distinction.

But there is yet another large work of the year 1661, which, in its extreme simplicity of subject, is one of the loftiest manifestations of Rembrandt's genius. Commissioned by the Guild of Drapers or Clothmakers to paint a portrait group of their Syndics for the hall of the Corporation, Rembrandt executed the great picture which hung originally in the Chamber of Controllers and Gaugers of Cloth at the Staalhof, and has now been removed to the Rijksmuseum. As in earlier days at Florence, the wool industry held an important place in the commerce of Holland, and had greatly contributed to the development of public prosperity. At Leyden, where the Guild was a very notable association, the Drapers, as we know, had decorated their hall with pictures by Isaac van Swanenburch, representing the various processes of cloth-making. At Amsterdam they formed a conspicuous body, and a remarkable work, painted by Aert Pietersen in 1599, and also in the Rijksmuseum, has immortalised the 'Six Syndics of the Cloth Hall' at that date. The arrangement of the six figures has, it is true, a somewhat accidental appearance, and evidently cost the artist little trouble. But the frankly modelled heads have a startling energy, notably that of the central figure, a middle-aged man with grizzled hair, and a face of remarkable intelligence and decision. The following words inscribed on the panel sum up the duties of administration: "Conform to your vows in all matters clearly indicated; live honestly; let your judgments be unbiased by favour, hate, or personal interest." Such a programme of loyalty and strict justice was the basis of Dutch commercial greatness. The model traders of Holland combined with perfect integrity a spirit of enterprise which led them to seek markets for their produce in distant lands, and a tenacity of purpose which ensured the success of the hazardous expeditions they projected. They brought the qualities they had acquired in the exercise of their calling to bear upon their management of public affairs, and it was not unusual for the most prominent among them, who had proved their capacity in the administration of their various guilds, to be elected councillors and burgomasters by their fellow citizens.

As was usual among the military guilds, which indeed tended to

'Rembrandt's Father' (1630)

Imprimé par F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Rembrandt's Mother.' (About 1631)

decline as the civic corporations increased in importance, it became a practice among the latter to decorate their halls with portraits of their dignitaries. The balancing of accounts was a favourite motive in the composition of these groups. The administrators would be shown seated at a table, verifying the state of the exchequer, and explaining by gestures, more or less expressive, that the accounts they had given in were correct, and that they had faithfully fulfilled their trust. Such was the somewhat trivial and frequently unpicturesque theme which all the painters of corporation groups had hitherto adopted with more or less of variation. The only differences arose from the different degrees of talent in the executants. But all show that spirit of conscientious exactitude and absolute sincerity which had brought wealth to their sitters, and was the true foundation of Dutch greatness alike in commerce and in art.

Such were the conventions tacitly accepted by painters of these groups when Rembrandt received his commission for the group of Syndics, a commission he very probably owed to his friend and admirer, Jan van de Cappelle. The latter was not only a marine painter, but a prosperous dyer, and consequently had dealings with most of the principal clothworkers. Be this as it may, Rembrandt on this occasion made no attempt to revolutionise traditional methods, as he had done in the case of 'The Night-Watch,' by the adoption of some unusual motive, or some novel effect of light. As Dr. Bredius has remarked, he recognised, no doubt, that such experiments were very far from pleasing to his patrons, or it may be that they themselves made certain stipulations to guard against possible vagaries. Rembrandt, at any rate, accepted the tradition of his predecessors in all its simplicity.

The five dignitaries of the Corporation are ranged round the inevitable table, prosaically engaged in the verification of their accounts. They are all dressed in black, with flat white collars and high broad-brimmed black hats. Behind them, and somewhat in shadow, as befits his subordinate position, a servant, also in black, awaits their orders. The table-cloth is of a rich scarlet; a wainscot of yellowish brown wood with wide mouldings forms the background. There are no accessories, no variations in the costumes; an equally diffused light falls from the left over the faces, which are those of men of mature years, some verging on old age. Such are the modest materials from which Rembrandt evolved his masterpiece.

At the first glance, we are struck by the startling reality of the scene, by the intense vitality and commanding presence of the sitters.

They are merely honest citizens, discussing the details of their calling, but the dignity of the manly faces commands respect. In these men, to whom their comrades have entrusted the interests of the corporation, we recognise the marks of clean and upright living, the treasures of moral and physical health amassed by a robust and wholesome race. The eyes look frankly out from the canvas; the lips seem moulded by the utterance of wise and sincere words. Contemplating this work, the spectator finds it hard to analyse the secret of its greatness, so artfully is its art concealed. What genius there is in the arrangement of the figures, in the slight inflection of the line of heads, in the easy variety of gesture and attitude, in the rhythm and balance of the whole! Passing on to details, we note the solid structure of the heads and figures, the absolute truth of the values, the harmonious unity of the various types, the individuality of their respective features and expressions. Our admiration deepens when we turn from the drawing to the rich and sonorous colour, the intense velvety blacks, the luminous whites, the brilliant carnations, when we note the treatment of the shadows, which follow the structure of the forms and bring them into vigorous relief, and finally when we appreciate the general harmony, the extraordinary vivacity of which will be most fully felt if we compare this with the surrounding pictures. The execution is no less amazing in its sustained breadth and sobriety. As Fromentin justly remarks: "The vivid quality of the light is as subtly observed as if Nature herself had prescribed the strength and the quantity" . . . "so perfect is the balance of parts," he adds, "that our final impression would be one of sobriety and reticence, were it not for the under-current of nerves, of flame, of impatience which we divine beneath this outward calm of mature age." No criticism could be more admirable, save for the terms 'nerves' and 'impatience,' which seem to me peculiarly inappropriate. I appeal to all students of this great work, in which there is no trace of precipitation or negligence, in which the 'flame' is the steady fire of an inspiration perfectly under control, and achieving its allotted task without hesitation. It needed such an artist as Rembrandt had now become to unite so intimately such a combination of rare qualities. Never before had he reached such a level of excellence, nor was there ever again to be such a privileged moment in his life, when all the gifts of Nature, mated to the mastery acquired by strenuous labour, had their ripest fruition. The work, for all its glow and brilliance, is impeccable, and criticism, which still wrangles over 'The Night-Watch' is unanimous in

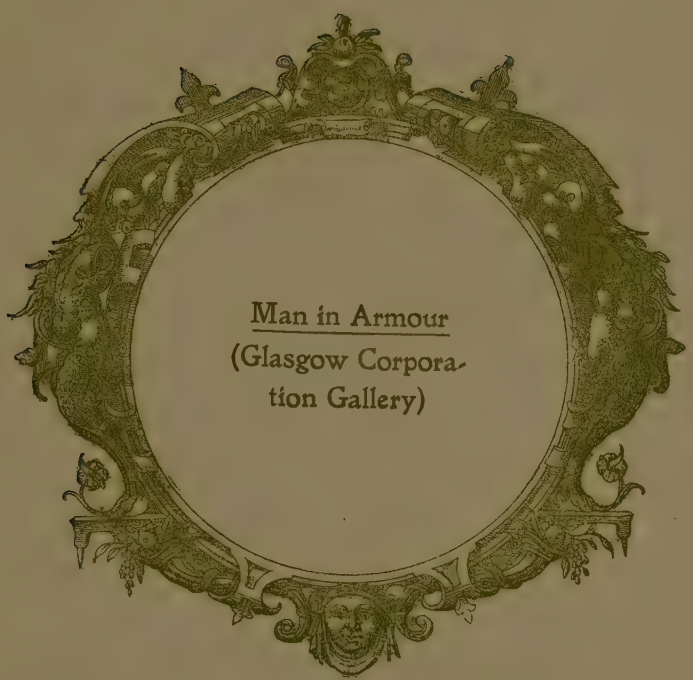
Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Christ Healing the Sick.' The Etching known as 'The Hundred Guilder Piece.' (About 1649)

Portrait of
Elisabeth Bas
(Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam)

The Mill
(Lord Lansdowne)

Portrait of a Lady
(Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam)



Man in Armour
(Glasgow Corporation Gallery)

admiration of 'The Syndics.' In it the colourist and the draughtsman, the simple and the subtle, the realist and the idealist, alike recognise one of the masterpieces of painting.

HOW 'The Syndics' was received we do not know. But the absence of any evidence to the contrary seems to prove that it made no great impression on Rembrandt's contemporaries. As we have already said, an enamelled smoothness of surface and elaborate minuteness of treatment alone found favour with the amateurs of the day. The master's broad and generous manner must have seemed a deliberate challenge to his contemporaries. Proud and independent as he had remained in his poverty, he cared little for the popular judgment. In the quarter where he was now established, his patient industry, and the decorum of his household had gradually won the sympathy of his neigbours. Hendrickje's affectionate care of Titus, no less than of Cornelia, gave colour to the assumption that both were her children; she was accepted as Rembrandt's lawful wife. Their 'liaison' had caused some scandal in its early days in the Breestraat; but now the quiet, regular life led by Rembrandt and his mistress disarmed suspicion as to the legitimacy of their union, and a document discovered some years ago by Dr. Bredius offers convincing proof that in their new home they were unquestioningly looked upon as man and wife. In a document bearing upon a disturbance in the neighbourhood caused by a drunken man, Hendrickje, who had been summoned to give evidence in the matter on October 27, 1661, is described as the 'huysvrouw' of 'Sir Rembrandt, the artist.' Shortly before, on August 7, 1661, believing herself dangerously ill, the young woman had sent for a notary to take down her last wishes, and this will gives final assurance of the harmony and affection which united the little family. Hendrickje bequeathed all her property to her daughter, but provided that, in the event of Cornelia's death, her inheritance should pass to her half-brother, Titus. Rembrandt was appointed her guardian, and was further given a life-interest in the property, in the event of his surviving Cornelia. Hendrickje recovered on this occasion, but her days were numbered, and although the exact date of her death is not known, it is probable that it took place before 1664.

The loss of Hendrickje left Rembrandt more defenceless than ever against the annoyances to which he was exposed, and he seems at this juncture to have given way to a very natural depression. If we consider his age, his many troubles, the sedentary life he had led, and the strenuous nature of his work, we shall not wonder that his sight began to fail, and that his once robust constitution was seriously impaired. The portraits of himself painted at this period reveal the ravages wrought on his person. He has grown fat and unwieldy; an unhealthy puffiness has invaded his cheeks and throat. His features are contracted as if with pain, and his sunken, bloodshot eyes, and swollen lids, indicate a gradual weakening of his sight. What artist, indeed, had ever made severer demands upon his powers of vision? These he was now condemned to expiate by a period of enforced idleness. Such, at least, is our interpretation of the absence of any works by him from 1662 to 1664, and of the fact that his etchings, which had gradually fallen off in number, after becoming very much more summary in execution, ceased altogether in 1661. When at last Rembrandt was able to resume his painting, his style had undergone a marked change. He was no longer able to attack complex subjects, requiring study and preparation. He now confined himself in general to one or two figures of large size, which he was content to sketch broadly on the canvas. His harmonies gradually became simpler, his effects less subtle, his palette more restricted, though the few colours he used were of the richest and warmest, vermilions, blended with brilliant yellows and tawny browns. The handling shows a growing breadth and decision. When the work prolonged itself unduly, we note that the Master's nerves were no longer under perfect control, and in his impatience he solves his problem by violence and by the multiplication of bold, feverish strokes.

But sometimes, side by side with these fierce and audacious pictures, we find others which show that he was still capable of reticence. The 'Lucretia' of 1664 (formerly in the San Donato collection) is a comparatively restrained work, in which the luminous carnations, relieved against a dark background, are very characteristic of Rembrandt, and justify Bürger's eulogy: "It is painted with liquid gold." 'The Workers in the Vineyard,' in the Wallace Museum, of the same period, though somewhat hasty in treatment, is a deeply expressive composition, marked by a harmony slightly austere, but of exquisite distinction. The figure of the Master, and his air of benevolent authority as he resists the unreasonable claims which

Printed by P. Schmidt, Paris.

'A Man watching a Woman with a Sleeping Child in her Arms'
Pen and Wash
(Haseltine Collection)

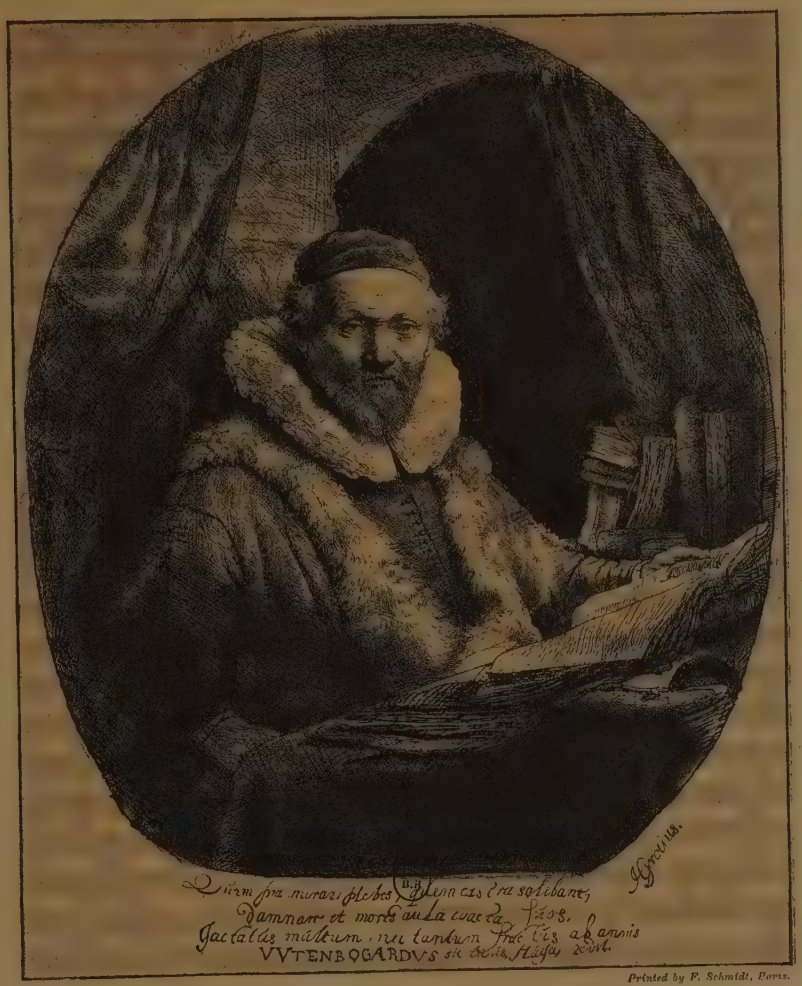
outrage his sense of ill-requited bounty, is in complete harmony with the spirit of the parable.

To this same period, about the year 1665, we may also assign the picture in the Rijksmuseum known by the arbitrary title of 'The Jewish Bride.' The theme, though simply treated, is very enigmatical. The man, in whom some have recognised the features of Titus, though his mature age hardly supports the hypothesis, seems too grave and elderly a person for the part assigned him, and, in spite of his somewhat compromising gesture, he has not the air of a seducer. The air of deference and ingenuousness that characterise the young woman and his own serious expression seem rather to proclaim him a father or guardian from whom she is about to part. It is unnecessary to dilate too much on the subject, which some critics take to represent the wooing of Ruth by Boaz. We will be content to admire the modest grace of the young woman, the beauty of her slender hands, and, above all, the radiant harmony of her carnations, the superb red of her gown, the dark greens of the background, and the iron-greys skilfully distributed among the more brilliant tints, to emphasise their freshness and brilliance.

In this year 1665, the prolonged disputes arising out of Rembrandt's relations with his creditors were finally brought to an issue, and on the joint petition of himself and Titus to the magistrates of Amsterdam, the latter was granted "Veniam Ætatis," an abridgment by a year of his minority. The minority, said the petition, "was a disadvantage to him in his business, and might become still more prejudicial." Two witnesses, "merchants of Amsterdam, and friends" of the petitioner, had supported the request. One of these was the faithful Abraham Frarssen, who had probably always given Titus the benefit of his advice in matters relating to his "business as a dealer in engravings, pictures and curiosities of all sorts." They certified that the young man was well qualified to receive the dispensation for the brief period still remaining, "by reason alike of his business capabilities and his exemplary conduct." The petition being granted, Titus was authorised to receive the sum of 6952 florins assigned him from the assets of his father's bankruptcy, and although this sum was much less than he had claimed, it is probable that the money came in very usefully to meet Rembrandt's more pressing necessities. Relieved from immediate anxiety, the master went to work courageously once more. Most of the pictures he now painted were portraits, or rather studies of persons belonging to his immediate circle, to judge by their very simple costumes. The

'Young Woman' in the National Gallery, signed and dated 1666, no doubt belongs to this category. The very individual expression of her gentle face is happily suggested by the master, and in his rendering of this characteristic type he combines absolute sincerity with that consummate mastery of material to which he had now attained. Mrs. Morrison's 'Portrait of a Young Girl' is even more attractive, though it has lost something of its first freshness. It must also have been painted at about the same time, but as Dr. Bode remarks, there is no justification for the title 'Rembrandt's Daughter,' by which it was commonly known. Cornelia was only eleven or twelve years old at the time, and the girl of the portrait is apparently from eighteen to twenty. Seated in an arm-chair, on the arm of which she rests her right hand, this charming person is wrapped in a white fur mantle, which, while it serves to supplement her scanty draperies, leaves her chemise and part of her breast uncovered. The crimson of the table-cover beside her and of the curtain that forms the background enhance her brilliant carnations, and the beauty of her youthful contours is fully displayed by the truth of the attitude, and the delicacy of the chiaroscuro.

To this period, we think, must be assigned a pair of bust portraits of a husband and wife, in the Maurice and Rodolphe Kann collections, both remarkable for their strongly individual expression, and for the beauty of the colour-scheme, in which rich red tones predominate, relieved in the case of the woman by the jewels and precious stones with which she is adorned. But in spite of the merits of these several works, they are all overshadowed by the famous 'Family Group' of the Brunswick Gallery, the most stupendous production of the master's last years. The light is concentrated on the five figures of the group, the father, mother, and three children, and these, with their sparkling eyes, their brilliant complexions, the almost superhuman vivacity of their bearing, look like apparitions emerging from the gloom around them. In the vigorous contrasts proper to the effect here aimed at by Rembrandt, there was scope for the most intense blacks and the most brilliant high tones, and for an infinity of delicately modulated gradations between the two. The colour is as rich as the chiaroscuro. The general harmony hovers between yellow and red, but red predominates, a red of regal magnificence, now frank and vivid, now veiled and subdued, its warm transparence emphasised by certain swift touches which give increased resonance to the tonality. The effect is as of an open casket, its golden ornaments and precious stones displayed on a lining of purple



'Etched Portrait of Uytenbogaerd'
1635

velvet. These manifold contrasts are heightened by those of the handling, which is by turns fiery and restrained, staccato, loaded or mellow, fused or rugged, as the master's instrument is by turns the brush, its butt-end, or the palette-knife. On one portion of the picture the colour is spread smoothly on an even ground; here and there the canvas itself is visible, while close beside the rough impasto is piled in heavy serrated masses, in which the various objects seem to be modelled rather than painted. There is a sort of frenzy in these caprices of treatment. We know of no work, either by Rembrandt or his predecessors, marked by such violent contrasts, such flagrant incoherence. And yet, all the inequalities of touch, the clangour of tones, the conflict of light, melt into harmony when seen from a distance. We have but to step back a few paces, and the construction becomes logical and vigorous, the values adjust themselves, the colour raises its triumphal hymn, and the master's creation reveals itself in all its radiant unity. We turn to the neighbouring canvases, and all seem dull, timid and insignificant. Involuntarily, our eyes are once more riveted on the amazing work which combines the vague poetry of dreams with such poignant reality.

The date on 'The Flagellation' in the Darmstadt Gallery is not very distinct, but it should probably be read 1668, although the execution has none of the asperity of the Brunswick group, and a study of Titus, made for this picture, was certainly executed some years earlier, as is shown by the apparent age of the sitter at the time. The exaggerated rendering of this episode is in no way justified by the sacred narrative, but the whiteness of the Saviour's long, thin body, which divides the composition into two parts, is startling in its impressiveness, and His livid pallor makes the patient serenity of the Divine Victim infinitely pathetic. 'The Return of the Prodigal,' in the Hermitage, shall close the list of these last productions, and, to judge by the somewhat brutal vigour of the execution, it may well have been almost the final work of the master, a work of which M. Paul Mantz justly says: "Never did Rembrandt show greater power, never was his utterance more persuasive. . . . Here, in place of the timidities of old age, we have the formidable energy of the unchained lion." Heedless of the spectators around, the father and the son give themselves up to their emotion, the one full of shame and repentant humility, the other of rapture at finding once more the lost son he clasps to his breast.

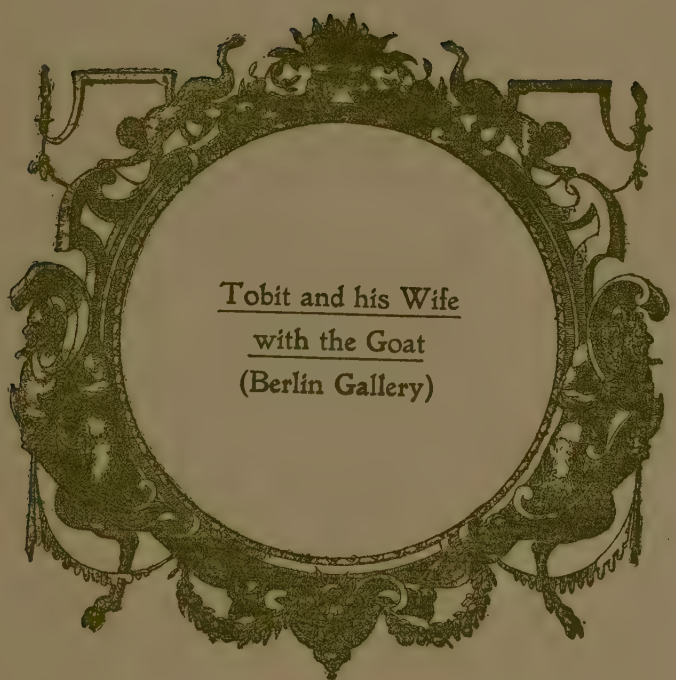
At the moment when he painted this work, in which he seems to have put all his heart, Rembrandt had not yet come to the end of his

trials, and the brief span of life remaining to him had other sorrows in store. The satisfaction given him by Titus' marriage with his cousin Magdalena van Loo was of short duration. The young couple had settled in a house near the Apple Market. Titus died a year afterwards, and the old painter remained alone with Cornelia on the Rozengracht. His sedentary and retired life sufficiently explains the complete oblivion into which he had sunk. So entirely was he forgotten by his contemporaries that the most absurd fables concerning him were credited, almost during his lifetime. There was a legend that he had died in Sweden, another that he had made a journey to England and painted many portraits there in 1661, the very year when his presence in Amsterdam is attested by the numerous and important works that bear this date.

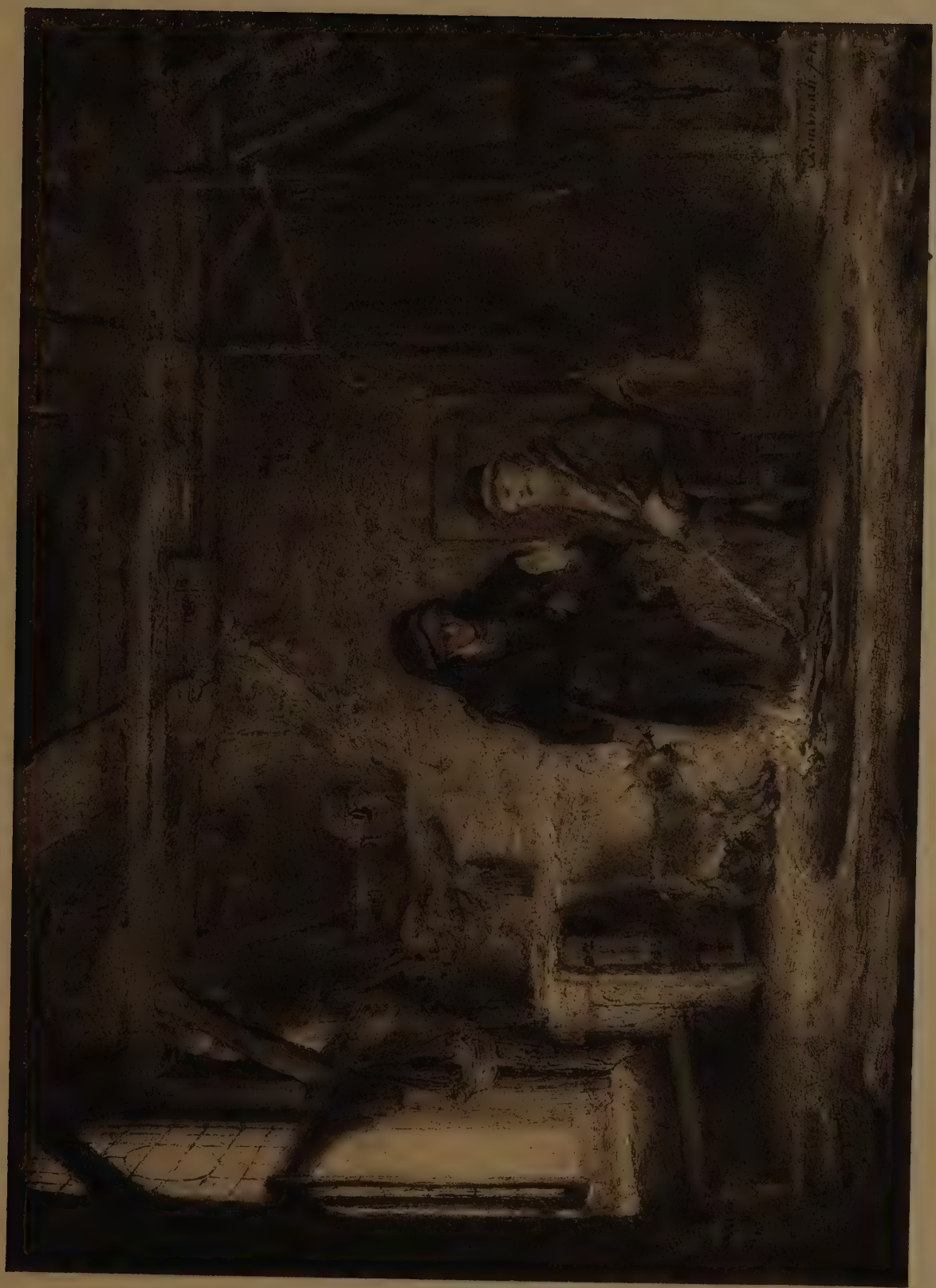
Broken by poverty, and crushed by bereavements, the old master was not long parted from his son. The greatest of Dutch painters passed away with no record of his disappearance but the brief entry in the death-register of the Wester Kerk: "Tuesday, October 8, 1669, Rembrandt van Rijn, painter, on the Roozegraft, opposite the Doolhof. Leaves two children."

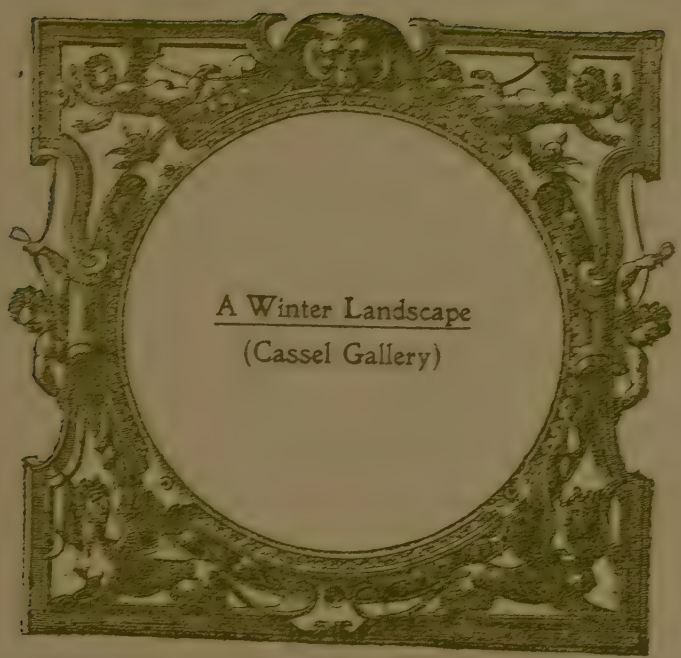
Printed by F. Schmidt, Paris.

'Rembrandt's Studio.' Pen and Wash (Louvre)

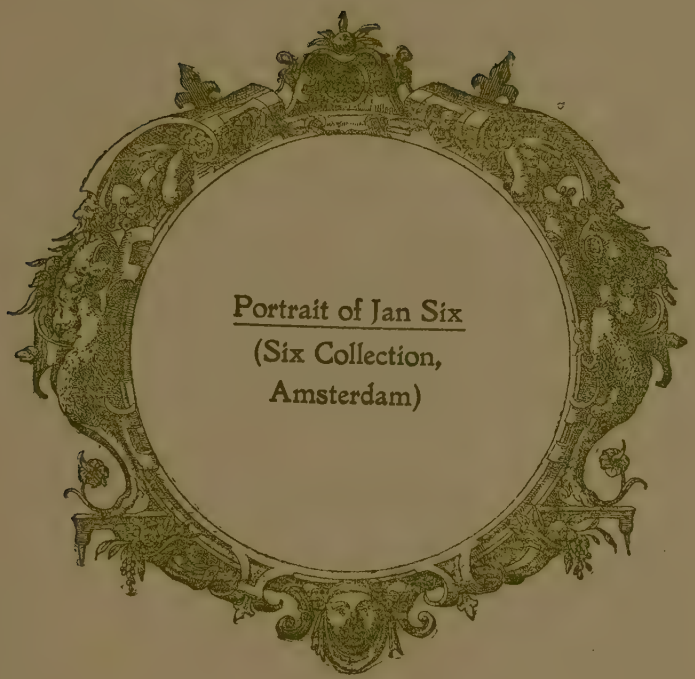


Tobit and his Wife
with the Goat
(Berlin Gallery)

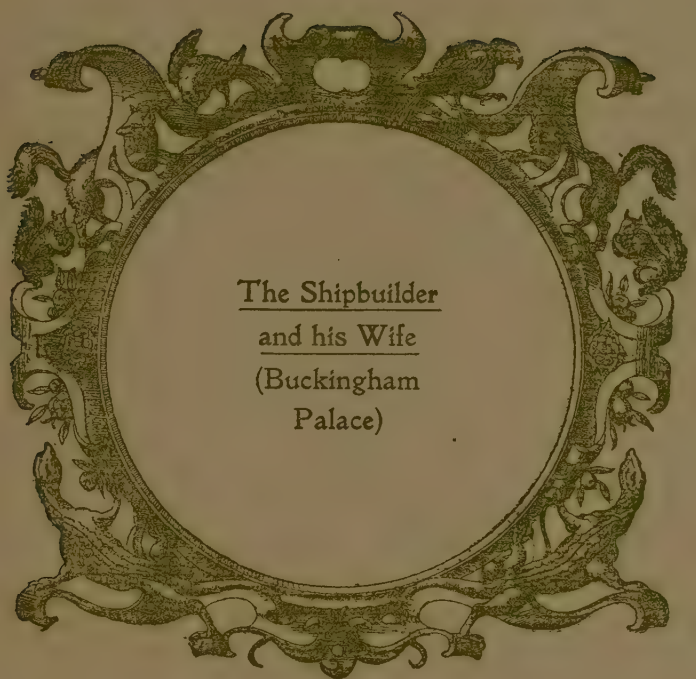




A Winter Landscape
(Cassel Gallery)



Portrait of Jan Six
(Six Collection,
Amsterdam)



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